UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

PROVISIONAL

A/47/PV.53
13 November 1992

ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 53rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 2 November 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. GANEV	(Bulgaria)
later:	Mr. JESUS (Vice-President)	(Cape Verde)
later:	Mr. ELHOUDERI (Vice-President)	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

- Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [79] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Conference

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

- Tentative programme of work

/...

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, within one week, to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Office of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

92-61718 2527-28V (E)

- Organization of work

- Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [79] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Conference

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79 (continued)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE (A/CONF.151/26, vols. I-IV and vol. II/Corr.1)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/598 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT: May I remind members that, in accordance with the decision taken this morning, the list of speakers in the debate on this item will be closed today at 5 p.m. I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. LEE (Republic of Korea): Last June in Rio world leaders established a long path into the future, a future which has yet to reveal itself to us today. This forty-seventh session of the General Assembly represents one of the first major milestones on that path, and after we have passed it we shall be one step closer to knowing what lies ahead for future generations. We shall have a better idea of our collective ability to generate the global partnership needed to protect the world and its people, and we shall understand the level of commitment and the level of compromise necessary to embark on a truly universal effort in support of sustainable development.

The Earth Summit demonstrated the many challenges involved in bridging the differences between nations. Nevertheless, the resulting agreements, most notably the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, also reflected the global recognition of the need for cooperation between developed and developing nations. However, much still remains to be done. Only the future, then, can tell us whether the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was a pivotal turning-point in the history of environmental and developmental efforts or merely an ill-fated attempt at realizing an ideal. During this session we must discover what is possible. We must respond to the urgency and the extent of the environmental deterioration of our planet while fully considering the right of all people to live healthy and productive lives.

The principles included in the Rio Declaration collectively reflect the fundamental concept underlying sustainable development. Individually, they pinpoint the steps needed to achieve sustainable development, including the creation of a global partnership based on common but differentiated responsibilities enhanced by the transfer of technology, as well as the prohibition of unjustifiable restrictions on international trade.

(Mr. Lee, Republic of Korea)

Undoubtedly, of the most important issues to be resolved, financing the necessary measures contained in Agenda 21 is first and foremost. The share of the financial burden of Agenda 21-related activities assumed by each country should be proportional to the country's ability to pay and its cumulative contribution to global pollution. For their part, developed countries have been called upon to contribute approximately $125 billion annually to the UNCED follow-up process and to increase official development assistance for this purpose.

The effective implementation of Agenda 21 will necessarily require substantial assistance in the form of technology transfers from developed countries. Many developing nations, including the Republic of Korea, are facing some difficulties in pursuing environmentally sound development owing to the limited availability of environmentally benign technologies.

In this context the developed countries must play a leading role in promoting the transfer of technology. Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 emphasizes the need for developed countries to make an essential contribution to developing countries in the form of environmentally sound technologies. During the Conference the Republic of Korea was an active participant in the negotiations on chapter 34, and, accordingly, we will actively participate in efforts to devise the mechanisms for facilitating global technology transfers. In particular, I support the idea of the purchase of environmentally sound technology by international bodies such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association, which should provide such technology on non-commercial terms to developing countries.

We cannot overlook the fact that the most valuable resource of each and every country is its people. Shifting government expenditures to education

(Mr. Lee, Republic of Korea)

and other social services must be recognized as the soundest investment for long-term development. Providing basic education to the many, as opposed to higher education for the few, should be seen as an underlying principle of public investment. Education for women, in particular, will reap substantial benefits for society, including lower population-growth rates.

Inasmuch as individual countries are committed to nurturing a global partnership, a sufficiently empowered multilateral organ is needed to oversee and monitor future progress. To ensure success in achieving sustainable development on a global scale we should now focus on targets and schedules rather than on speeches and declarations. It is time for the international community to focus its efforts on making the Commission on Sustainable Development an effective instrument for monitoring UNCED follow-up actions.

The Republic of Korea welcomes many of the institutional proposals for the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Commission, which my Government aspires to join, should be provided with a strong and detailed mandate and with a membership that reflects due consideration for equitable geographical distribution. Moreover, in determining the organizational structure of the Commission, we would do well to give full consideration to the ongoing process of revitalization and restructuring of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields.

Non-governmental organizations also merit a participatory role in the Commission's activities. Given their often intimate relationship with the many communities that form the primary foundation for sustainable development, non-governmental organizations can contribute much to the global dialogue. In this respect, concrete and practical measures should be taken to encourage and support the representation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission.

(Mr. Lee, Republic of Korea)

In the light of the need for a strong secretariat support structure to ensure the success of the UNCED follow-up process, we believe that the Secretary-General has a crucial task, as chief administrative officer of the Organization, in establishing a small, action-oriented and professionally-staffed body, headed by a senior official with direct contact with the Secretary-General. We trust that this collaboration will prove extremely productive in terms of advancing the work of both intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

Now I should like to draw attention to the progress of our efforts regarding UNCED follow-up activities. These days, the notion of sustainable development has rapidly spread to the people and policy-makers of Korea, especially after UNCED. Social awareness of the link between environment and development is being promoted throughout the country by the media and other organizations, including women's and consumers' interest groups.

In order to accommodate the changing nature of the global environmental problems after UNCED, our Government has established a ministerial committee on the global environment, which is headed by the Prime Minister. The committee not only sets goals but also draws up solid action plans with acceptable time-frames for UNCED follow-up measures. The conclusions of the committee will be incorporated in the Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan in order to guide implementation strategies affecting the environment. I expect that these efforts can promote environmentally sound and sustainable development and propel Korea to an even higher level of achievement than that envisoned in Agenda 21.

To solve environmental problems in a realistic and concrete manner, the Republic of Korea has begun to strengthen various environmental regulations in

(Mr. Lee, Republic of Korea)

order to improve the quality of life. We have implemented measures to internalize the environmental costs by expanding the "polluter pays principle", with an environmental charge system. In order to enhance precautionary policies, the Government is drafting the environmental impact assessment law to bring about greater progress in the current environmental impact assessment system.

For the effective implementation of UNCED follow-up programmes in the long run, the Government places greater emphasis on reforming the industrial structure to make it less energy-consuming and less waste-producing. In this regard, priority is given to the adoption of taxation and financial policies in order to encourage energy conservation and increase energy efficiency. Emphasis is also placed on the protection of biological diversity. We have taken a number of steps such as carrying out the national basic survey of the natural ecosystem and designating natural ecosystem conservation and protection areas. In addition, the ratification by the Republic of Korea of the Convention on biodiversity as well as that on climate change is expected in the near future, after the necessary domestic arrangements have been completed.

In addition to a strong national programme, the Republic of Korea has announced its commitment to the environmental cooperation of the North-East Asian region, which comprises the Korean Peninsula, Japan, Russia, China and Mongola. We are currently working closely with our partner countries in order to formulate action programmes to tackle regional environmental problems such as marine pollution and acid precipitation.

With this in mind, the 1992 Seoul Symposium on UNCED and the Prospects of the Environmental Régime in the Twenty-first Century was held in Seoul in

(Mr. Lee, Republic of Korea)

September this year. During the Symposium, the participants agreed to establish an informal, unofficial network for environmental cooperation within the North-East Asian region. Furthermore, the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of Korea will together organize the North-East Asian Environmental Conference, which will be held in Seoul next year.

I should like to conclude by re-emphasizing the importance of our deliberations this month. Indeed, we must during our discussions find the political will and the foresight to institutionalize the mechanisms needed for renewed progress in the UNCED process. The Republic of Korea is prepared to share with others the experience gained in the process of our economic development. Each Government must endeavour to pick up where the Earth Summit left off, and we must act on behalf of future generations that will some day thank us for having given the world a second chance.

Mr. NAKAMURA (Japan): It is indeed a great pleasure to have the opportunity to address the General Assembly today on the important question of how to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

The Earth Summit held in Rio, in which I was honoured to take part, was unprecedented in almost every way: the scope of the work accomplished, the level of participation, the extent of its impact on the public, and, most importantly, the degree of cooperation among Governments and international organizations, among which the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system were most prominent.

(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

The Rio Declaration and the other epoch-making agreements on the framework of international cooperation in the field of environment and development that were concluded at the Conference mark a major step forward in our efforts to achieve sustainable development. It is increasingly clear that the success of UNCED depends upon implementation of these accords. The road from Rio will be as difficult as the road to Rio was. At this session, the General Assembly must make the arrangements that will enable us to follow up on UNCED; it must lay the basis for United Nations involvement in the implementation of Agenda 21 and other agreements reached at the Conference. I therefore wish to take this occasion to address the major issues involved in the UNCED follow-up.

First of all, it is important that the General Assembly endorse the agreements reached at UNCED so as to confirm formally its commitment to implementing them. Also important are the preparations for early and effective operation of both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. For its part, my Government intends to make efforts to see that these Conventions are ratified as soon as possible.

Concerning the Statement of Principles on Forests, to which my Government attaches particular importance, it would be useful to establish a process to review its international implementation. In this connection, it is most important to build confidence between countries in the process of implementing the Principles while enhancing cooperation. My Government believes that such confidence will provide the basis for a dialogue on whatever arrangements might be necessary in the future. To this end, my Government intends to strengthen overseas technical and financial cooperation through various

(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

channels for afforestation and sustainable management of forests, while enhancing sustainable management of forest resources at home.

My Government also considers it of great importance to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draw up a convention that will provide an international framework for enhanced efforts to combat desertification, and it intends to participate actively in the work of the committee.

Institutional arrangements, in particular the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, should be discussed vigorously at this session of the General Assembly. I should like to outline my Government's basic position on this issue.

First of all, any proposal with regard to institutional arrangements should aim to strengthen the role and capacity of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in the economic and social fields. Institutional arrangements should be built on and integrated into ongoing efforts to revitalize the United Nations system. It is important to avoid duplication or overlapping of work especially when a new forum or body is created. The roles of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in follow-up activities vis-à-vis the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be clearly defined along the lines envisaged in Agenda 21.

In this connection, I should like to express my Government's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/47/598 and Add.1), which comprehensively covers the important issues relating to institutional arrangements and offers insights and suggestions for consideration. The Japanese Government supports the major thrust of the report and is confident that it will provide a useful basis for discussion.

(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

The high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, which has the key role in following up on UNCED, should have broad representation among Member States, reflecting the full diversity of the interests of industrialized and developing countries, particularly those that are environmentally vulnerable, such as small island States. The participation of non-Member States, international organizations and, once an appropriate procedure is instituted, non-governmental organizations should also should be promoted.

A highly qualified and competent secretariat is likewise a prerequisite for effective follow-up of the Conference. My Government takes note of the Secretary-General's proposal, which presents some of the main considerations underlying his approach, if not specific conclusions. The Japanese Government shares his view when he points out

> "the desirability of a single streamlined structure which would provide a common framework for the provision of overall support to the [Economic and Social Council] on the one hand, and Secretariat follow-up to the Conference on the other" (A/47/598, para. 69).

Since my Government took the initiative in proposing, during the preparatory process, the high-level advisory body which is expected to provide high-level expert advice to the Secretary-General to assist him in formulating proposals for the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Commission on Sustainable Development, we are keenly interested in this body. My Government welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal that the advisory body should consist of a relatively small number of eminent persons and should maintain a balance with respect to geographical representation and fields of expertise.

As my Government has often stated, Japan intends to support the efforts of developing and other countries in the area of environment and development,

(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

through both bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. On the other hand, self-help efforts on the part of developing countries are of primary importance to make such support truly effective.

In the implementation of Agenda 21, a useful role could be played by the International Development Association (IDA), which should pay due attention to this function in negotiations on the tenth replenishment of its resources.

With regard to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), an agreement has been reached on the major role it is to continue to play, after necessary improvements, concerning financial contributions in the field of the global environment. Appropriate funds need to be secured, once a mechanism ensuring their effective and efficient use is established.

Japan has continuously expanded its official development assistance, setting for itself the goal of net disbursements in excess of $50 billion for the five-year period 1988 to 1992, which represents a 100 per cent increase over the previous five-year target. Since the urgency of preserving the world environment has been recognized, Japan designated its official development assistance target in 1989 for spending in the field of environmental protection. In this connection, I should like to refer to Prime Minister Miyazawa's announcement at the Rio Conference that Japan will expand its bilateral and multilateral official development assistance in the field of the environment to approximately 900 billion to 1 trillion yen - approximately $7 to $7.7 billion - during the five-year fiscal period that began in April 1992.

(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter, established in June for its official development assistance, also highlights Japan's stance of attaching great importance to the environment in its official-development-assistance tasks, stating the importance of environmental conservation and the compatibility of environment and development.

Japan considers it important to establish partnerships with developing countries in implementing environment-related official development assistance. Japan will do its utmost to formulate and implement projects through consultations with developing countries.

I should like to refer to a recent development. I am pleased to inform this body that a few days ago the International Environmental Technology Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme was formally established in Osaka and Shiga in Japan. In cooperation with the Government of Japan the Centre will carry out activities to promote the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, with special focus on the sustainable development of big cities and sound management of fresh-water resources.

Our joint endeavour to protect the global environment has just begun. The United Nations must now demonstrate that it can respond effectively to the needs of the international community and its Member States in the field of environment and development. I should like to assure you, Mr. President, that my Government will spare no effort to contribute to the success of this endeavour and to the role the United Nations will play in it.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members of the following additions and changes to our tentative programme of work.

(The President)

As already announced last Thursday, 29 October, the Assembly will consider agenda item 27 after hearing an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia on Tuesday, 10 November, in the morning; on Friday, 12 November, the Assembly will consider agenda item 37. On Monday, 23 November, the Assembly will take up agenda item 25 and agenda item 40. On Tuesday, 24 November, in the morning, the Assembly will consider agenda item 39. On Wednesday, 25 November, in the morning, the Assembly will take up agenda item 139. On the same day, the Assembly will consider agenda item 26.

The list of speakers for all those agenda items is now open.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that I have conducted extensive informal consultations during the past week with representatives of the States Members of the United Nations. The subject matter was the necessary future work of the General Assembly arising from agenda item 10, "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization" (A/47/1), including the report of the Secretary-General entitled "An Agenda for Peace - preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping" (A/47/277).

As a result of those consultations, a broad consensus was reached that the work on this agenda item should continue in an informal, open-ended working group as well as in the Main Committees of the General Assembly. Accordingly, I am pleased now to inform the Assembly that I shall establish this informal, open-ended working group, and that its initial task will be to analyse all the suggestions and ideas put forward in the forum of the General Assembly during the general debate, the debate on agenda item 10, and the

(The President)

informal consultations. I shall report on the outcome of the work of the group, including recommendations, draft resolutions and decisions on the pertinent issues by 19 December 1992. This informal, open-ended working group will maintain close working relations with the Main Committees. My intention is that the Main Committee Chairmen be very closely associated with the work of the group. As President of the General Assembly, I shall maintain permanent and coordinated contact with the President of the Security Council on General Assembly matters and on the work on agenda item 10.

I have the distinct pleasure to inform the Assembly that the first meeting of the informal open-ended working group will be held on Wednesday, 4 November 1992, at 3 p.m., in Conference Room 3. All Member States interested in attending that meeting should register with the Office of General Assembly Affairs by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 3 November 1992. I would request members to refer to the Journal for the schedule of the working group.

AGENDA ITEM 79 (continued)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE (A/CONF.151/26, Vol. I-IV)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/598 and Add. 1)

Mr. COLOSIO (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): At the historic Rio de Janeiro Conference, the international community shaped a new consensus: that sustainable development is the new means of preserving and consolidating the progress and coexistence of mankind.

The commitments achieved at Rio constitute the beginning of a process that demands all our energy. It also demands the strongest political will to put into action a vast development programme that is in everyone's interests and that guarantees that our needs, those of our children and those of our children's children will be met.

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

At Rio the community of nations, represented at the highest political level, opened the way to the future. Societies will not enjoy great wealth if it is generated at the expense of the environment. Peaceful coexistence will not be assured if, for the sake of apparent progress, the balance of the Earth is put in jeopardy.

In this context, the role the United Nations should play was fully acknowledged. We must now strengthen its action by establishing mechanisms that guarantee transparency, effectiveness, universality and democracy.

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

The members of the Commission for Sustainable Development created by the Rio Conference will examine the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21, through periodic evaluations and action-oriented recommendations. The process, which began in June this year, presupposes new forms of international cooperation that must be consistently reflected in the Commission's working methods. The idea is to combine efforts and will, not to condemn or to punish.

We must speak out, and we must recognize that in the area of new and additional financial resources the results achieved at Rio fell short of expectations. The Commission for Sustainable Development gives us an opportunity to correct those shortcomings by creating a functional link between those resources and all other sources of financing with a view to the complete implementation of Agenda 21. But our achievements will be meagre unless we obtain a commitment from the wealthiest countries. In our view, national efforts need to be clearly echoed on the international level.

For Mexicans, the priorities are clear: in 1992 we are devoting 1 per cent of our gross domestic product to programmes to improve the environment. It is indispensable that national and international financial resources be available. It is therefore necessary that the more developed countries honour their commitment to transfer 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to development programmes.

We pay a tribute to the countries that, in response to the Rio agreements, have made financial pledges at this session. We appeal to all other nations with a similar commitment to follow their example.

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

Directly related to the availability of financial resources is the question of the transfer of technology, which should take place on the most favourable terms possible and should include, inter alia, timely access to scientific and technical information, the strengthening of institutional capacity and the training of personnel. All those elements are particularly significant for the achievement of sustainable development. The Commission must create machinery to follow up these efforts and encourage the transfer of technology in the framework of Agenda 21.

Desertification is today among the most critical problems afflicting nations, irrespective of their level of development. This growing phenomenon affects an increasing number of societies, and we therefore deem it enormously important to begin negotiations so the international community can sign and ratify an international convention to combat desertification.

Mexico believes also that the General Assembly should accord due importance to agreements pertaining to the oceans and seas and to the protection of their living resources, as well as to those pertaining to small island States.

Development and environmental responsibility are inseparable principles. We do not want to be dominated by a geography of guilt. We want to face our historic responsibility in present and future development. The sovereignty of States depends on a just and lasting solution to development problems, creating a favourable economic environment for the growth of nations.

We have the natural resources; what we need is the technology and the scientific know-how to ensure that our work is creative, thoughtful and far-reaching enough to hand down to future generations effective environmental

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

norms. Mexico, in full exercise of its sovereignty, has the primary objective of soundly managing the environment with the participation of society as a whole.*

The preparations for the Rio Conference inspired striking interest among broad sectors of society, which was manifested in active and positive participation, mainly through non-governmental organizations. The same must be encouraged in the process now beginning. To that end, there must be great opportunity for participation, both in monitoring the implementation of the Rio agreements and in formulating recommendations that will help the Commission achieve its goals.

We in Mexico know that development based on the abuse of natural resources is not progress. We in Mexico have gone beyond a notion of development based on "conquering" nature. For Mexicans, development now means harmonious coexistence with nature. True development must be sustainable and must always aim at maintaining harmony between productive activities and the protection and enhancement of the environment. As stipulated in the Rio Declaration, protection of the environment is an essential part of the development process.

---

* Mr. Jesus (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

Similarly, Mexico considers that among the best contributions all States can make to the protection and enhancement of the environment is the eradication of extreme poverty. We can never reach the goal of sustainable development unless we face and meet that challenge. We in Mexico are aware of this linkage, and we have taken the institutional steps necessary to have a comprehensive, integral impact on the various elements affecting development.

Thus, in May 1992, on the initative of the President of Mexico, Mr. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the Congress of the Union created the Secretariat for Social Development with the central goal of raising, in a productive manner, the general level of well-being of the Mexican people, especially that of the dispossessed. With an integral approach to development, the new Secretariat has responsibility for regional development, the fight against poverty, urban development, housing and environmental protection. In that way the Mexican Government has responded to a demand: to give institutional form to the concept of sustainable development.

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

The Government of Mexico is also focusing its public policy on the achievement of balanced social development. The underlying principle in this policy is the fundamental idea of the solidarity programme, which requires active participation by society and open, resolute joint responsibility by society and government in the fight against poverty and in the quest for sustainable development.

On the basis of these tenets, support has been given to social initiatives aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty in its two fundamental dimensions: first, the lack of basic services and, second, the lack of productive employment. Thus far, the results of that solidarity have been highly satisfactory.

As a part of these efforts, we in Mexico have drawn up and are implementing a programme for productive ecology. Through this productive ecology programme, it is our intention to alleviate the pressure exerted on natural resources by many population centres in rural areas, because of the absence of other development options. Hence this programme is aimed at supporting alternate forms of production and alternate employment prospects, which will allow various social groups to raise their standard of living without doing any damage to natural resources. This is how, through a sense of solidarity, Mexico is seeking harmony between economic development and the environment.

Mexico stresses its commitment to a present and a future of full respect for the environment, and does so fully aware of its past, in which mankind coexisted in full harmony with nature. In fact, the ancient inhabitants of what is Mexico today achieved a culture that permitted them to satisfy their needs with complete respect for nature. Their deities - water, the sun, the

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

mountains and corn - placed both human beings and resources under their mantle of protection.

Subsequently, the industrial revolution in its quest to satisfy the needs of an ever-growing population encouraged unrestricted exploitation of what nature offered - a supply which was considered to be inexhaustible. It is true that it promoted progress and generated wealth, but at the same time it jeopardized the balance of our ecosystems.

Today we recognize that nature has its own limits for its regeneration and equilibrium, and we are also aware of the fact that the apparent development of the few does not ensure peaceful and stable coexistence of the peoples of the world.

Until fairly recently there was a vision of development that gave priority to quantitative over qualitative aspects - a vision which encouraged the establishment of industries in a disorderly way and the unrestricted exploitation of natural resources. Today in Mexico we have appropriate norms and we also have the possibility of access to modern technologies - a possibility which is even greater today because of the future free trade treaty between Mexico, the United States of America and Canada.

We gather our inspiration from the past, and we welcome the progress of science and technology in order to achieve sustainable development which meets the needs of all without endangering the lives of future generations. As has been pointed out by President Salinas de Gortari, we cannot defend the environment with a sterile economy, and with industries that evade responsibility for protecting the environment. We want neither a sterile nor a destructive economy. The vast sphere of action between these two extremes is where we in Mexico find ourselves.

(Mr. Colosio, Mexico)

International cooperation in a spirit of global solidarity aimed at achieving development and the ecological integrity of the Earth is a definite need. The future of mankind lies in planning economic development along with ecological development. The human spirit is born of Mother Earth herself: protecting the Earth means protecting our own origins and safeguarding our destiny. Such is the spirit that drives Mexico to join the efforts of the United Nations to achieve sustainable development.

Mr. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso)(interpretation from French): When we met last June in Rio de Janeiro, it was nothing less than an encounter between mankind and the organization of its own survival. Like the rest of the international community, Burkina Faso expected much from this unprecedented event, which had been prepared with such difficulty, such feverishness and such passion. In that respect, we salute the commitment of Mr. Maurice Strong and the devotion of the secretariat which assisted him in his colossal task. Two facts emerged from this meeting - the first confirms the indissoluble link between the environment and development, while the second establishes that it is the follow-up to Rio de Janeiro which will tell if we are up to dealing with what is at stake.

The General Assembly is therefore invited today, for forty-eight hours, to clarify and agree on how the decisions taken at Rio de Janeiro should be implemented.

My delegation welcomes the adoption and signature by most States of the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. They are but the start of a long journey which will see them ratified and implemented, and their provisions and necessary additions respected.

Alongside these Conventions, the adoption of Agenda 21 brings us, eight years ahead of time, to the twenty-first century. The century in which we are

(Mr. Ouédraogo, Burkina Faso)

living now has seen the subjugation and subsequent political liberation of the majority of mankind. And when North and South met - the former bearing its demands, the latter its claims - the exchanges were more a matter of confrontation than of communication. The environment and development have convinced both North and South that ultimately we can only be saved together or perish together. The concept of a global partnership thus took shape during the gestation and production of Agenda 21, which provides the bedrock of future relations of international cooperation.

(Mr. Ouédraogo, Burkina Faso)

Preliminary estimates indicate that $125 billion a year will be needed to implement Agenda 21. A larger contribution by the developed countries is needed to carry out all the recommendations of Agenda 21.

In this regard, we must congratulate and thank those States that, honouring much earlier commitments, allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. We should also encourage those countries that have agreed to try to reach this percentage by the year 2000, and we hope that the rest will be able to join those two categories.

The recommendations of Agenda 21 will be jeopardized if new and additional resources are not provided and if the problem of developing countries' debt is not solved freeing those countries from a near-insurmountable handicap especially since the trend towards a net negative transfer of financial resources, coupled with the deterioration in the terms of exchange, undermine their efforts making all their sacrifices useless. At the same time, ecologically rational technologies must be made available under preferential conditions, because otherwise the global partnership will be an illusory concept.

These are the facts - sad but true. Without financial resources, without transfers of technology and without the political will, translated into action, this programme for survival and development cannot be implemented, and our speeches will be merely incantatory. We therefore support the proposal to convene before the end of the year a pledging conference to implement the activities envisaged in Agenda 21.

(Mr. Ouédraogo, Burkina Faso)

Burkina Faso, a country hard hit by drought and desertification, was pleased that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development decided to create a framework for negotiations on the elaboration by June 1994 of an international convention to combat desertification, particularly in Africa. Our Minister of Environment and Tourism stated in Rio that

"desertification endangers the future of millions of people whose survival depends mainly on the exploitation of land".

Burkina Faso therefore had a keen interest in participating actively and positively in the negotiations on this issue, which is of prime importance to those countries affected by desertification.

Here I should like again to express our thanks to all those who contributed to the adoption of that decision. Burkina Faso hopes that the spirit of solidarity that prevailed in Rio will continue to animate the international community during the negotiations leading up to the creation of the intergovernmental negotiating committee.

We hope that the convention will contain firm and specific technical and financial commitments, thus reinforcing in quality, intensity and volume the efforts already made nationally and subregionally over more than 10 years in the battle against this scourge.

My delegation will participate actively and constructively in negotiations during this forty-seventh session to create an intergovernmental negotiating committee. We will also participate in negotiations on elaboration of the convention.

In this connection, I should like to submit the following proposals, which have the support of many of the States concerned.

(Mr. Ouédraogo, Burkina Faso)

The intergovernmental committee, to be open to all Member States and observers, should: hold an organizational session and five negotiating sessions; have a five-member bureau - one for each region; have an ad hoc secretariat, led by an experienced, high-level official; and have at its disposal, as in the case of the Convention on climate change, a group of multidisciplinary experts. The negotiating process should be financed from the Organization's ordinary budget and by voluntary contributions. The committee should report to the General Assembly through a channel to be decided on by the Assembly.

As Ouagadougou is the headquarters of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel and the base for the services of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, we believe that these organizations as well as the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development will have a role to play in this process. The relevant non-governmental organizations could also help us ensure the success of this endeavour.

During the preparatory phase the debate on the structure and management of the environment-development equation was arduous and lengthy. In Rio we finally agreed on the principle of establishing a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, mandated to follow up and coordinate the decisions of the Conference. The Commission will be the main, central intergovernmental mechanism for following up on UNCED at the national, regional and international levels.

We believe that the Commission should be set up under Article 68 of the Charter in order to ensure that the Conference decisions are effectively followed up.

(Mr. Ouédraogo, Burkina Faso)

The Commission's tasks are to enhance international cooperation; to rationalize intergovernmental decisions on the integration of environment and development issues; and to examine the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels. In carrying them out it should be guided by the principles of the Rio Declaration for sustainable development in every country. The Commission should consist of 53 members elected by the Economic and Social Council for a three-year term on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, and should be at the highest possible level. In accordance with United Nations practice, Member States and Observers could be admitted, at their request, as observers.

The Commission's follow-up and coordination functions would also cover all those listed in chapters 33, 34 and 38, including transfer of technology and relations with financial resources and mechanisms, in the light of what I described earlier, including the Global Environment Fund.

The Commission on Sustainable Development should have a separate secretariat, coming within the United Nations budget and be headed by an Under-Secretary-General directly responsible to the Secretary-General. The secretariat, which will have to be highly qualified and draw expertise and experience from the UNCED preparatory process should be staffed on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

The Commission's first session should take place in New York in 1993. In 1997 it should be possible to convene a special meeting of the General Assembly to examine and evaluate the implementation of Agenda 21. We believe that the Commission should have a mandate that is not static, but dynamic and evolutionary, so that in the future it may embrace all the aspects and tasks that the General Assembly deems it useful to add in order to ensure sustainable development.

(Mr. Quédraogo, Burkina Faso)

My delegation has not dealt with all the aspects of Agenda 21 and all the results of Rio, but we are convinced that the best way to approach these subjects is always to bear in mind justice and solidarity, which we must seek to ensure in all our endeavours.

Speaking from this very rostrum of our common estate, Burkina Faso once posed the following question:

> "Will the new world order be based on the universal message of the Charter or on the harsh and selective realities of the international balance of forces? In the circumstances, what is to be the role of the have-nots - the immense multitude of people who are suffering from hunger, thirst, ignorance and disease? In a word, are these unfortunates to remain outside or are they to enter our family house so that we can all sit down together as brothers, to share and to grow together?"
>
> (A/46/PV.4, p. 48)

The answer is in our hands.

Mr. NATH (India): At the outset, Sir, I would like to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you chair this meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his detailed statement introducing this agenda item. India attaches great importance to his statement, which sets the tone for this debate. The Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Ambassador Razali Ismail, will be carrying our deliberations through to their final outcome in the Second Committee. He conducted similar negotiations with great aplomb and skill during the process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and I wish him good luck. He can count on the full cooperation of the Indian delegation.

(Mr. Nath, India)

I am speaking on behalf of a country that is neither rich nor powerful in the conventionally understood sense of these terms, a country nevertheless that counts one-sixth of the human race as its children and encompasses a mega-biodiversity of subcontinental dimensions, an unsurpassed range of geo-climatic conditions and a tradition of environmental sensitivity that goes to the very roots of our millennia-old culture.

The problems of material poverty and industrial underdevelopment that plague us only serve to heighten this sensitivity to environmental conservation. More than anyone else, it is the poor who suffer most the consequences of ecological imbalance. Shifting monsoon patterns, degraded agricultural land, denuded soil and cruel droughts are only one side of the picture; greater exposure to health hazards and susceptibility to disease complete it.

We in India are determined in our resolve to strive for a better quality of life for our people, and we know that the way forward is the path of sustainable development. But between the knowing and the doing lies a chasm wide and deep that can be bridged only by a great technological leap.

Much happened at Rio. The awareness and consciousness aroused by UNCED is enormous. But where do we go from here? In vain would we search for the accomplishments of Rio in the voluminous documentation that flowed from it, or in the glare and glamour of the media blitz that continue to surround it. It is only by getting to the heart of the matter and working our way outwards that we can hope to carry out the tremendous task that we set for ourselves five months ago, that we can hope to translate into reality the political will demonstrated by over a hundred Heads of State or Government when they adopted the Rio Declaration.

(Mr. Nath, India)

What is the core of the outcome of UNCED? I could summarize the chief elements as follows.

First, environmental problems cannot be seen in isolation, and the basic development needs of developing countries must be met before environment by itself can take precedence over other concerns.

Secondly, global environmental concerns largely require immediate action by the industrialized world - both corrective and preventive. Developing countries can and will participate, provided they are given the wherewithal for the extra effort required.

Thirdly, greater financial flows and the transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries must be ensured.

Fourthly, no international debate on the environment or on development can impinge upon the sovereign right of each country over the use of its natural resources.

Fifthly, for globally sustainable development, a global partnership on a basis of equality, with equity as a prerequisite, is imperative.

Post-Rio activities, at the international level in particular, must continue to focus on these core elements. Similarly, international institutions, whether existing or new, must structure their activities in a manner that takes these elements into account. The implementation of the Conventions, for example, must not be attempted in a manner that imposes unnecessary burdens on developing countries or seeks to regulate essential economic activities. This would not only be unjust and against the spirit of Rio, but also foolhardy and infructuous. It is necessary to take a long, hard look at the institutions we have, our priorities - or lack of them - and how these may be modified so as to harmonize environmental policies for the common

(Mr. Nath, India)

weal. Only by reconciling the development needs of mankind with the environmental compulsions that we confront can we hope to protect our planet.

In calling for the establishment of a Commission on Sustainable Development, UNCED proposed an institutional mechanism to achieve it. The Conference deliberately did not specify its areas of priority, just as it did not fix priorities within Agenda 21. An institution to deal with a subject as vast as environment and development must inevitably have variable priorities - variable over time, variable over regions. What is of great importance today may be overtaken by some other sector in a few years. What is most important to one region is very often of secondary importance to another. But cross-sectoral issues affect all of us in much the same way and are also unlikely to change in nature or dimension in just a few years. It is also within cross-sectoral issues that international cooperation can be most productive, most effective and perhaps least controversial.

(Mr. Nath, India)

The obvious inference is that the Commission on Sustainable Development should focus primarily on cross-sectoral issues, such as the flow of additional resources, the modalities for transfer of technology, the development of capabilities, removal of trade imbalances, the reorientation of international institutions where necessary, and so on. Sectoral programmes, through which the Rio decisions would actually be implemented, will have to be seen in the context of these cross-sectoral concerns. For example, if a country wishes to accelerate the programmes related to safe drinking-water, then the Commission should be charged with the responsibility of promoting and encouraging the necessary external assistance which is required for these programmes, whether it be financial resources or technology or the development of capabilities, human resources and institutions. But we would not expect the Commission to decide on priorities within that country or to delve into internal policy frameworks.

Likewise, the review methodologies adopted should be thematic rather than country-specific. This would help focus on the pressing problems at hand and avoid tangential arguments which could dilute our efforts in a sea of polemics. The work of the proposed Commission would not be meaningful, or even acceptable, if it strayed into areas which are essentially national concerns and are not relevant to international cooperation. We have in this regard the interesting parallel of the United Nations Environment Programme, which has achieved its greatest success not in local or regional contexts but on matters concerning the global environment.*

---

* Mr. Elhouderi (Libyan Arab Jamahariya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Nath, India)

Agenda 21 also refers to a high-level advisory body of eminent persons working in their individual capacity to advise the Secretary-General on issues of environment and development. I share the belief that advice from an international panel of eminent experts would always be of benefit to us. This body must not reduce the flexibility which the Secretary-General should be able to enjoy in obtaining advice on various matters. Its scope should be to supplement his efforts in drawing upon international expertise and not give rise to ambiguities in the linkages between the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations system as a whole.

Flowing from Rio is the response of the other organs of the United Nations system. There is an encouraging and healthy trend in most of these organizations towards incorporating the principles of environment and development into their activities. There is still an urgent need for incremental monetary flows, but while this is happening a reorientation of some activities can go a long way in promoting sustainable development. Crucial to the implementation of Agenda 21 is the need to mobilize additional resources for capacity-building to enable countries to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century adequately. The United Nations Development Programme's Capacity 21 initiative is an important instrument in achieving this. One disturbing feature has been the desire of institutions to draft policies and programmes in isolation from what the other organs attempt to do. These organizations must be given some guidelines that the repeated exhortations from Rio regarding a coordinated approach must be respected. The activities undertaken have to be harmonized with those undertaken by other organizations and in accordance with the guidelines or framework which the Commission on Sustainable Development may formulate.

(Mr. Nath, India)

India would propose to the Commission on Sustainable Development the need to prioritize the provision of safe drinking-water to each and every human settlement on this planet.

There is need to keep under constant review the realization of the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance, since without financing the implementation of Agenda 21 would be in serious doubt. We do not ask for aid for aid's sake; financial assistance is sought so as to catalyse our developmental effort and harmonize it with the broader environmental objectives we are all committed to achieving. We cannot lose sight of the fact that it is the developed countries that are chiefly responsible for the degradation of the global environment. This is not merely a historical observation. It continues to be so. The contribution of 80 per cent of mankind, in Asia, in Africa, in South America, to global pollution is insignificant in comparative terms. This, in effect, means that we, by our underdevelopment and the non-utilization of our environmental space, are actually subsidizing the high consumption patterns and lifestyles of economically developed societies - lifestyles which would have been impossible, which would have doomed the Earth a long time ago, had we Asians and Africans and Latin Americans been as profligate with our natural inheritance as developed countries have been.

Appropriate technology is the key with which we must unlock the resources of the Earth if we are to make any progress in achieving the goal of sustainable development. The yearning for development is so fundamental that it cannot be curbed, nor can it be held in harness to await a more conducive climate. It will go on regardless. The onus is therefore on developed countries to provide the necessary technology on affordable terms and the funding for the development of indigenous technologies. India has time and

(Mr. Nath, India)

again suggested the Planet Protection Fund as a suitable mechanism by which the transfer of technology could be realized in consonance with the spirit of Rio.

Two Conventions were signed at Rio. They are somewhat different from other agreements, being legally binding instruments which will be operated by the parties to those agreements. But in more senses than one they would influence and be influenced by activities undertaken as a follow-up to Rio whether through the Commission on Sustainable Development or through other organizations. The Conventions represent an earnest effort by the global community to work together towards protecting our common environment. They together constitute a fine balance between the recognition of national sovereignty over natural resources and the need to cooperate globally on certain issues. The main elements of these Conventions are similar to what I have called the core elements of the Rio agreements. If the Conventions are implemented successfully, undoubtedly the implementation of the larger areas represented by Agenda 21 will gain momentum. It is therefore necessary to set into motion as quickly as possible the process envisaged by both Conventions. India view these as complementary to each other: the objectives of one are inevitably reinforced by the other.

The effectiveness of international environmental conventions is certainly enhanced if they are acceded to by all countries; but we cannot lose sight of the fact that it is to each country's advantage to accede to these Conventions. Failure to do so does not so much detract from the value of the Conventions as to jeopardize the credibility of the commitment to conservation, lending it a hollow ring.

(Mr. Nath, India)

Environmental irresponsibility on the part of some has resulted in forests' suddenly being viewed as the only lifeline to the future. It would certainly not be proper to regard the conservation of forests as sufficient excuse to continue wasteful patterns of energy consumption. We in India do not look upon our forests as mere sinks for toxic emissions; forests mean much, much more to us. In India forests are a community resource, with social, economic and cultural ramifications, and their management has to be seen in that context. The sovereign right of a country to use the natural resources within its jurisdiction, though so basic, still seems to require reassertion. Forests are an issue for global cooperation only in so far as financial, technical and scientific cooperation is concerned. They are not a global issue if this involves international regulation, which is not only unacceptable, but also unworkable. The Forestry Principles agreed upon at Rio represent a delicate balance between the differing interests of various groups of countries, and we should all work together to implement those Principles to the best of our ability, enhanced by international cooperation.

Never before have the nations of the world reverberated with such interdependence. Never before has humankind had so much at stake. Never before have the realities been so stark. Development must be global for it to be sustainable. Man has but one Earth, one planet, one home. We went to Rio with great expectations and we came away with even greater hope: hope for the future of our planet - indeed, hope for the future of mankind.

Gathered here in the General Assembly of the United Nations, for the first session since UNCED, we find that the time has come to take those initial steps to give concrete shape to that hope. Let our steps be sure,

(Mr. Nath, India)

decisive and just, for if we falter or fail .... But we shall not; of that I am confident.

Mr. CHAREST (Canada): I am proud to speak on behalf of the people of Canada at this meeting of the General Assembly. We undertake a historic task here today: to reflect on last June's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, and more importantly, to begin implementing, in concrete terms, the decisions reached there.

The Earth Summit marked a watershed in international affairs. It was held in response to startling evidence that our planet is in trouble. And it was held with the understanding that we cannot continue to behave as we have in the past, if we are to survive.

In Rio we committed ourselves to an urgent new course of action: a new course that we call sustainable development. Our deliberations here in New York must demonstrate our resolve to turn the noble words of planetary healing uttered in Rio into action.

From the earliest stages Canada was a strong supporter of the Conference. We sought to play a constructive part in the advance preparations, the preliminary negotiating rounds and the actual meetings at the Earth Summit itself. Further, we hope to continue playing a constructive role as nations and international organizations move forward to embrace sustainable development and the products of Rio.

Having a resource-based economy, Canada recognizes the challenges of sustainable development. We also feel the pressures of modern industrialized society. Perhaps this is why we are concerned that a way be found to build

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

bridges and partnerships between rich and poor, North and South, East and West.

We believe that a better, more effective dialogue among leaders is the only way to build understanding, trust and commitment to common action - the very necessary foundation for an environmentally sustainable world.

(spoke in French)

As I have already said, Canada sought to play a constructive part in the preparations for the Conference, the preliminary negotiating rounds and the actual meetings at the Summit itself.

We were able to do so because we were well prepared. We had played an active part in the World Commission on Environment and Development. We had responded to the Commission's 1987 report by setting up a National Task Force and national, provincial and territorial round tables on the environment and the economy. And we had heeded the message of the Commission's report by adopting sustainable development as the main goal of our Green Plan, the national strategy that Canada launched in 1990.

Developing our Green Plan taught us valuable lessons, which we were able to apply in Rio. It became clear to us that to implement sustainable development three factors are vital: transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. First, decision-making must be transparent; the process must be accessible to the people who will be affected by the decisions. Secondly, all sectors of society must be accountable for their actions, or their inaction; they must all give specific commitments by which their performance can be judged. Thirdly, sustainable development demands partnership, with everyone taking part in a common effort. There is a place for everyone at the table of sustainable development; no one can be left out if we are to succeed.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

This is the way to ensure a healthy environment and a prosperous economy for present and future generations.

We were pleased that this was the approach adopted for the Earth Summit. In fact, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness are now being called the "Rio Way". That is an accomplishment as great as the other achievements of UNCED, because making the shift to sustainable development requires not simply money or new programmes, but a change in attitude and above all in the decision-making process.

Indeed, Rio has already changed Canadians. The perceptions that affect behaviour have been profoundly altered. Fully two thirds of Canadians - three times the pre-UNCED number - recognize the need for international cooperation on important environmental issues.

(spoke in English)

One essential change will involve our institutions. Canada strongly supported the creation of a Commission on Sustainable Development at the Earth Summit. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on how to achieve that goal.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

We would like to see a high-level commission set up as soon as possible. This body will promote the implementation of Agenda 21 internationally; more generally, it will serve as a catalyst for sustainable development within the United Nations system. To be effective, it is crucial that the commission retain strong links with the United Nations development system. We believe that this commission should incorporate the principles of what we call in Canada the "Rio way": transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. To this end, it should provide for the active participation of non-government organizations and other major groups, a principle on which Canada will continue to insist. As a first step to demonstrate Canada's commitment to the benefits of the Rio way, I am proud that Canada's delegation to the United Nations debate on UNCED follow-up today will include representatives of non-government organizations.

Finally, to be effective the commission must be realistic. Its work plan must be pragmatic, flexible and achievable. It should also proceed in a spirit not of confrontation but of cooperation and mutual support. That is the way to achieve tangible and significant results.

On behalf of Canada, I thank the Secretary-General for his thoughtful report on institutional follow-up, which provides a useful basis for our deliberations. The report underlines the importance of integrating environmental considerations into economic and social decision-making, in order to move the world towards sustainable development. Rio was a success in providing a framework for this goal: Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the forest principles offer a comprehensive blueprint for action. For Canada, the key issue is that the commission must be capable of ensuring the implementation of this ambitious blueprint at the national, regional and international levels.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

Of course, the Commission on Sustainable Development is only one part of the picture. Sustainable development themes and programmes will have to be integrated into the entire United Nations system with the help of a reformed and effective Economic and Social Council.

Specifically, on environmental aspects of sustainable development, for 20 years the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has played a notable part in this field. Canada has strongly supported UNEP since its creation, and we continue to do so. Over the years, the Programme, under the leadership of Dr. Tolba, has carried out a very broad and difficult mandate. It is to be commended for its efforts and for its many successes. Canada looks to an enhanced role for UNEP in the future, and to a strengthening of its capacity to undertake its mandate. I believe that UNEP will play an even more important role in the years to come by enhancing its efforts in such programmes as its environmental assessment, the EARTHWATCH Programme, and in the development of legal instruments to address environmental threats shared by many nations. All Member States must renew, and where possible augment, their commitments to UNEP, both tangible and intangible, in order to give it the strong support it deserves. I believe that UNEP has reached full maturity, and is ready to meet the challenges ahead. At the Earth Summit, Prime Minister Mulroney announced that Canada will double its contribution to UNEP. That increase clearly indicates our confidence in the United Nations Environment Programme.

(spoke in French)

When attending the Earth Summit, Canada's Prime Minister proposed five crucial steps to capitalize fully on the momentum of the summit. These steps constitute for us in Canada a framework for environmental cooperation.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

Mr. Mulroney called on all countries to translate into action and coordinate their commitment to sustainable development through national "green" plans. He accepted an invitation from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to share with other nations Canada's experience in this area. In this regard, Canada has been pleased to commit Can$ 2 million to UNDP's new Capacity 21 programme, which has been established to help developing countries build up their desired capacities in the area of management of the environment and sustainable development. Secondly, the Prime Minister called urgently for the expeditious signing, ratification and implementation of the Conventions on biodiversity and climate change, and gave an assurance that Canada would ratify these agreements before the end of 1992.

Thirdly, he called on the developed countries to act on aid, trade and debt in order to help the developing nations make the transition to sustainable development. With regard to aid, he noted that Canada supported the Global Environmental Facility, pledging that Canada would contribute its fair share. On trade, he proposed that the next round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations focus on environment issues. And on debt, he announced that Canada had reached agreement with various countries in Latin America to convert up to Can$ 145 million of official development assistance debt in Latin America into sustainable development projects.

Fourthly, Mr. Mulroney addressed the question of international institutional machinery. He called for action by the General Assembly to set up a Commission on Sustainable Development. He also undertook to broaden the terms of reference of Canada's International Development Research Centre to include sustainable development, and provide for United Nations involvement in this institution. Over the next 10 years, the Canadian International

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

Development Research Centre will be required to manage Can$ 1 billion allocated to building up research and technological capacity in developing countries.

Fifthly, the Prime Minister proposed a renewed effort to draft an Earth Charter, fixing 1995 as the target date for its completion, to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly. In addition, Mr. Mulroney called for immediate follow-up to UNCED's achievements on forests and fishing.

(spoke in English)

The consensus we reached on the Statement of Principles on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of Forests was hard won, as I know from my own involvement in the negotiations. That statement stands as the first international acknowledgement of the need to act together to preserve the world's forests. It is critical that we move on two fronts. First, nations must do their utmost to implement the guiding principles domestically; and, secondly, we must strengthen international dialogue on forests, principally through the Commission on Sustainable Development as the forum for monitoring UNCED follow-up, and also through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). This is a priority for Canada, and we are taking immediate steps. Our National Forest Strategy - Canada's sustainable forestry action plan - will be adjusted to fulfil the guiding principles on forests. Our domestic model forest programme will create a network of 10 model forests across Canada, with the involvement of government, business, non-governmental organizations, community organizations and indigenous people. In Rio, Mr. Mulroney announced the international counterpart of this initiative.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

Canada will support the establishment of model forests in three developing countries. Our goal is to build a global network of sustainable forestry in action. The international model forests programme is one example of how nations can work together to give meaning to the concept of sustainable development.

Canada's Prime Minister also called for action on the issue of overfishing on the high seas - something of vital concern to thousands of fishermen in Canada's Atlantic provinces. These Canadians have seen a drastic decline in all fish stocks - most notably the northern cod, a resource of once-legendary richness exploited for 400 years by North Americans and Europeans, and more recently by distant-water fishing fleets from Asia as well. Now that resource is in danger of being lost forever. The economic and social effects of this precipitous decline in stocks on the fishing communities in Atlantic Canada have been catastrophic. Further, the impact is being felt around the world.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

One of the principal reasons for the sharp decline in fish stocks on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland is the indiscriminate overfishing on the high seas beyond Canada's 200-mile limit. And the same overfishing can be seen on many of the world's major fishing grounds. The only way in which the international community can avert a calamity in high-seas fishing is through international cooperation - by establishing rules to which all fishing nations will adhere.

UNCED's Agenda 21 calls for the convening, as soon as possible, of an intergovernmental conference under United Nations auspices with a view to implementing the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea that relate to straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. Canada strongly endorses such a step and is working with like-minded States at this session of the General Assembly on a draft resolution calling for the convening of a conference on high-seas fisheries, to begin work in the spring of 1993. The goal that we seek to achieve through this conference, on behalf of the fishermen of the world, is the creation of a high-seas fishing regime that will result in sustainable development for all.

We must be prompt in our efforts to respond to this crisis. Time, tide and declining fish stocks will wait for no one. We must therefore set a deadline of two years from now for the United Nations high-seas fishery conference to complete its work. To delay any longer would ensure the devastation of both the coastal fisheries and the high-seas fisheries - which are interdependent - the world over.

This will be one of the first tests of the Rio spirit. We are convinced that, with good will on all sides, the outcome will be successful. Action in all these areas will do much to further the cause of sustainable development.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

(spoke in French)

We must also continue the discussions between North and South that began in Rio. The Earth Summit was important because it bound together the concepts of environment and of development. Rio reminded us that poverty forces people to plunder their environment and draws them into ever greater poverty. It is an unsustainable cycle that we in the developed world must help to stop.

From the Rio experience we learned that we can find solutions - but only if we understand each other's points of view. Naturally, dialogue can be difficult, as different nations face very different problems. But Rio showed not just that we can find solutions but that we must do so. Canada has a proud tradition of fostering dialogue that leads to innovation and creative solutions. It is a tradition that we intend continuing.

Canada is committed to achieving sustainable development in partnership with the third-world countries. The Canadian International Development Agency's policy on environmentally sustainable development lays the groundwork for this partnership. Among others, an important task before us this month will be the launching of the process for drawing up an international convention to combat desertification.

(spoke in English)

The deliberations that are beginning at the United Nations today signal the start of the integration of the results of Rio into the way we do business between nations. In Canada, we have taken the first steps. We are proceeding with ratification of the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity, and we shall produce the national plans that are called for.

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

In August we successfully completed negotiations with the United States and Mexico on a new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This is the first major international trade agreement to include a commitment to sustainable development, as well as specific environmental-protection clauses. Further, the three NAFTA countries have agreed in principle to establish a North American commission on the environment.

In addition, this week a meeting of Canadians from across our country will discuss how we shall build on the achievements of Rio. At the meeting, there will be representatives of all sectors of our society - including business, labour, women, youth, native peoples and environmental and developmental organizations. We are thus continuing the inclusive approach that we adopted for the Earth Summit. This time our aim will be to reach consensus and to promote action by all sectors to fulfil our Rio commitments - each sector accepting its share of responsibilities.

We believe that strong domestic action is essential, because sustainable development must be addressed at every level. But there is another reason: no country will do more for the citizens of another country than it will do for its own. Domestic action provides a sound basis for equally necessary international initiatives. Canada thus feels able to make a positive contribution to the discussions at this session.

The list of issues that we must address is long and pressing. To assist us, however, we have the strong direction given by the Earth Summit. In particular, we know that questions of environment and development can no longer be dealt with in isolation, since each depends on the other. We know also that we must integrate concerns of North and of South, of developed and

(Mr. Charest, Canada)

of developing nations. And we must foster the participation of all sectors of our societies in achieving the solutions that we seek. In short, we must practise transparency, accountability and inclusiveness - the Rio way at all levels.

The Earth Summit established new standards by which to measure our domestic and international actions on environment and development. Those standards could be crucial in the coming years. Now we face the challenge of living up to them. And there is no better place to start than here, at this meeting.

Ms. PIETIKÄINEN (Finland): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development is a milestone in the evolution of the United Nations system which was born in San Francisco 47 years ago to regulate international relations. The Rio Earth Summit of last June represents an important step in a process to prevent a fatal confrontation between humankind and the environment - a conflict that could totally endanger life on earth.

The Earth Summit pledged a commitment to sustainable growth, poverty reduction and environment protection. This pledge is based on a profound understanding of the close relationship between environment and development. Man is not superior to nature. Without proper respect for the support capacity of the Earth we can have no prospect of a healthy environment or of economic growth. A new, more rational use of natural resources can show us a new path to a sustainable economy.

Those conclusions were shared at the highest political level. The widest commitment ever achieved was made to the attainment of sustainable development. This commitment was based on shared responsibility and a new

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

partnership. Today there must be no doubt about our resolve to fulfil our Rio commitments.

At this session of the General Assembly we must embark on the long road towards turning these commitments into reality. Agreements or programmes will make no change if they are not implemented. The way in which we turn the Rio Declaration into action and implement Agenda 21, the Forest Principles and the two Conventions will be decisive.

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

The United Nations specialized agencies and other international organizations and financing institutions have an important role to play in implementing Agenda 21. The Agenda provides a long-term framework and guidance for priorities in the work programmes of the international agencies. It is crucial that the Assembly urge and impel the whole United Nations system to begin the effective implementation of Agenda 21.

Governments too have a responsibility in launching the international cooperation agreed at Rio. Since our decisions were taken at the highest political level, our Governments must consequently also stand ready to take action in a coordinated manner in the decision-making bodies of the specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations system.

The Government of Finland welcomes the agreement on the establishment of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. We would like to emphasize the importance of its role in providing a forum for political debate and policy guidance on major issues of sustainable development in implementing the Rio decisions as well as integrating environment and development throughout the United Nations system. The monitoring of the provision of new and additional financial resources for Agenda 21 from all sources will be equally important.

The Assembly should decide on the organizational modalities of the Commission. The institutional arrangements should be closely linked with the overall reform of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations. This reform is already under way and will, we hope, lead to a more effective Economic and Social Council.

We consider that the size of the Commission should strike a balance between efficiency and representativity. While membership must be limited to

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

Governments, the Commission should enhance the participation of and dialogue with non-governmental organizations and the scientific and private sectors as well as with financing institutions. The contribution of those sectors was a source of encouragement during the UNCED preparatory process, and it should therefore be further pursued.

The functions of the Commission, in particular its policy guidance, require a careful consideration of the organization of its work and the development of its working methods. We think it important that the Commission should not limit itself solely to reviewing the progress achieved in implementing the results of Rio, but that it should, rather, assume a dynamic role in identifying the priorities and emerging issues related to sustainable development. I am pleased to see that the Secretary-General in his report also emphasizes this approach.

The possibilities of arranging ministerial debates of the Commission, coordinated with the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, should be studied in order to avoid repetition and overlapping.

Without the support of a strong and competent secretariat, the high-level Commission will remain a talk shop. The central role of the Commission in policy-making would in our view speak in favour of the secretariat's being located at Headquarters in New York. This would permit it to work in close collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Development and thus lead to a reinforcement of both units.

Since it is the prerogative of the Secretary-General to make the necessary administrative arrangements in this regard, I shall not dwell in more detail on this question, but only add that the head of the Commission secretariat must be given the status and means to allow him or her to act as

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

the top coordinator of sustainable development in the entire United Nations system.

The results of the Earth Summit encouraged the larger reform process by underlining the unique and indispensable role of the United Nations in promoting sustainable development. I would strongly encourage the Secretary-General to integrate the environmental considerations in the reform process in a manner indicated by UNCED. We must set our ambitions high. Sustainable development must be an integral part of the mission of the United Nations to promote prosperity and justice and be closely linked to the political functions of maintaining peace and security in the world. I was very pleased to note that the Secretary-General in his very important statement this morning expressed views on the reform process that correspond very much with those of my Government.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should continue to play a decisive role in stimulating and coordinating the environmental activities of the United Nations system. Therefore, UNEP's role and capacity should be strengthened to meet those functions foreseen for it in Agenda 21. Environmental monitoring and impact assessment, dissemination of environmental information, further development of international environmental law and its implementation, as well as providing expert advice to developing countries in their capacity-building, will be most important.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), like UNEP, has a crucial role in the UNCED follow-up. It has in particular a central role in organizing the United Nations system's support for building the capacity for sustainable development in developing countries. This important task must be fully taken into account in the preparations of the Sixth Programme Cycle of

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

the UNDP. Implementation of Agenda 21, and in particular capacity building for sustainable development, should not be seen as a separate but as an integral part of the functions of UNDP.

The sustainable management, conservation and development of forests will be a cornerstone in strengthening economic, ecological and social well-being in most countries. The adoption of the forest principles is a significant step in global cooperation in the sustainable development of the forest resources of the world.

Our next task is to prepare national programmes and other related measures to implement these principles. It is very encouraging that several Governments have announced that they have already undertaken to prepare such programmes. These programmes should be based on sovereignty and on responsibility in using forest resources and take into account the differences in local conditions. The economic benefit from sustainable forest management belongs to the local population.

The implementation and monitoring of the forest principles will lead to significantly improved international cooperation. It will increase mutual confidence and make it possible to launch a process of negotiating a global forest instrument based on the principles agreed at Rio.

The preparation of a convention that encompasses the various functions of forests should be in the long-term interest of all countries. The Conventions on Climate Change and on Biological Diversity cover only some functions of forests. The launching of negotiations on desertification will include one more important aspect.

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

Yet these Conventions emphasize mainly the conservation of forests. There is a good case for considering all functions and purposes. It is equally important to cover social and economic aspects under one régime in a balanced manner.

Promotion of the sustainable multiple use of natural forests must be the real focus of the future forest convention. It should strengthen such management of forest resources as will allow all countries to halt the decrease of forest resources and at the same time meet their economic and social needs.

We are ready actively to support the process leading to the forest convention negotiations. New and additional financial resources are needed to enable developing countries to prepare and implement forestry programmes. The Government of Finland stands ready to support financially programmes and projects on reforestation and training in developing countries.

The second Pan-European Ministerial Forestry Conference will be held in Helsinki next June. That Conference can serve to strengthen the commitment of European Governments to turn the forest principles into reality and pave the way for intensified cooperation with developing countries.

The main emphasis in implementing Agenda 21 should be at the national level. International cooperation will have the role of supporting and coordinating national measures as well as steering them in the right direction. Making development sustainable must be the responsibility of each sector and each level of public authorities. The input of non-governmental organizations, industry, labour unions and the scientific community is indispensable in this work. This will require political leadership and coordination both nationally and internationally.

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

The Government of Finland is in the process of organizing its own follow-up work to UNCED, which will be based on broad representation of expertise and interests in the Finnish society. In Finland, integrating environment and development in decision-making is our long-term objective. Economic instruments and environmental impact assessments are being developed for this purpose. Encouraging and promoting changes in production and consumption patterns, including the promotion of energy saving and the development of new and renewable energy sources, are high on our agenda.

Efficient implementation of the Conventions on biological diversity and climate change is also one of our priorities. We are preparing for the early ratification of these two Conventions and urge other Governments to do so as well.

It is most important that the Commission for sustainable development encourage the exchange of information and experience on national measures early in its work. The preparation of guide-lines for reporting and for information exchange will be our first priority in the practical work of the Commission. We are ready to share our own experience with other countries in preparing the domestic Agenda 21 and national programmes for implementation of the Conventions.

The essence of the Rio spirit is partnership and shared responsibility. The main responsibility for national sustainable development will rest with the Governments. They agreed at the highest political level that substantial new and additional funding for the implementation of Agenda 21 is required. For developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, official development assistance is the main source of external funding.

(Ms. Pietikäinen, Finland)

I would like to recall that during the preparatory process of UNCED the Nordic countries proposed that donor countries agree to reach the 0.7 target for official development assistance by the year 2000. In spite of our present budgetary constraints we are committed to this. The alleviation of poverty, protection of the environment, strengthening of the role of women, support for democracy and respect for human rights will be the focus of our development cooperation strategy.

Today we face the serious danger that the national and international economic crisis will impair our vision and lead to short-sighted solutions. It is dangerous to underestimate the difficulties in finding political support and understanding for the interrelationship between long-term global and national benefits. In such a situation the goals of domestic sustainable development also seem remote and are easily put aside.

We owe it to future generations to face and respond to the challenges of our Rio commitments. Even though the path to sustainable development would seem to go uphill, we have a good road map in Agenda 21 and the other decisions made at Rio. As the road is long, it is important that the goal be clear in our minds and that we check the direction from time to time. Finland supports the holding of a special session of the General Assembly for an overall review of the UNCED decisions and their implementation not later than 1997.

We are prepared to shoulder our common responsibility in attaining the goals we collectively set at Rio. Finland stands ready fully to meet its commitments.

Mr. SERRATE-CUELLAR (Bolivia) (interpretation from Spanish): It is from this eminent universal forum that great changes are expected - changes consistent with the new times upon which humankind has embarked. A historian who in the future looks back upon the present century will surely emphasize the events of the last decade.

It is precisely at this session that the United Nations can lay the foundations for a higher dimension of human life in society or lead the world down the road of doubt and discouragement.

The challenge of the moment is that simple and that impressive. This Organization may never have another chance like this to choose between change in keeping with new realities or missing the train of history.

In these times in which we live, there is already a growing consciousness that we are all part of a global community. Five hundred years after Columbus, we have rediscovered our planet, finding that it is a single interdependent entity in which the manner of life of some affects the destiny of all.

In this modern - or, if one prefers, post-modern - era the ideals of liberty which have come down to us from the French Revolution have gained in strength, but the principles of equality and fraternity continue to be left behind.

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

Never before has democracy, as a value and a tangible reality, taken hold in every continent. Human rights, recognized as a universal principle, are playing an increasingly vital role. The risks of global confrontation have virtually disappeared, and the world's new security has become decentralized. Keeping the peace has become more a matter of foresight than a matter of remedies. However, the main sources of insecurity are still with us. Poverty, drugs and destruction of the environment continue to pose individual and collective threats of human tragedy and social malaise. These are the new horsemen of the apocalypse, the great common challenge that science has not been able to overcome - perhaps because in our frenzied race for progress we have tended to forget that it is man as such who should always have been the focus of all organized endeavour.

Bipolar strategies have given way to a tripolar economy with a new style of competition, one which brings together a group of seven at the exclusive banquet table of development. The process that broke down iron curtains has gone hand in hand with an individualism that is now digging a protective moat around accumulated wealth, centralizing resources and raising new barriers around its expanded spaces even as it topples the old walls of nationalism.

Windows to integration have been opened but, at the same time, doors to trade have been shut as a result of the re-emergence of protectionism and the subsidizing of local interests or constituencies. Multilateral financial facilities and tariff agreements, while becoming a worldwide trend, continue to act as a funnel with a wide opening for some and a narrow opening for others, and the most stringent rules always applying to the most powerless.

Moreover, technology - even as it becomes the contemporary hallmark of the development of productive forces - has at the same time become the major

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

feature differentiating levels of development among our countries. And it is not only advanced technology that has become the privilege of the few, but also the technology designed to meet basic human needs. Knowledge has brought us closer together, but technological growth is separating us.

The gaps widening between us are becoming increasingly unjust. The rich are growing richer and the poor of the world, ever more numerous, are growing poorer. The disparity in income between rich and poor three decades ago was 30 to 1. That gap has doubled and now stands at 60 to 1. The gap widens to 150 to 1 if we compare the incomes of the world's richest quintile with those of the most marginalized quintile. And the trend continues in the same direction, nationally and internationally, against a backdrop in which communications are enhancing expectations.

We now have a better understanding of each other's realities and we are able to understand each other more clearly, without prejudices or ideological dogmatism. The truth is that, although political walls have fallen, social chasms have widened. And just as the differences between us are clear, it is equally clear that we have over time replaced the culture of force with the force of culture, pursuing common goals that can only take shape around a recognition of the specificity and interests of each nation.

This is not a time for confrontation, but a time to build bridges. Political bridges are already going up, and we must lay economic and organizational foundations and, above all, underpin them with bonds of cooperation.

Electronic media and modern means of transport have shrunk both physical and mental distances. The concept of neighbourhood now encompasses the whole planet, and the geo-economics of interrelatedness overshadows direct contacts

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

or shared borders. Against that background, new paradigms are beginning to take shape. Reality is leading us to convergent approaches with which to face global crises. The idea of democratizing democracy is gaining ground, reaching deeper levels of citizen participation in national and international affairs. At the same time, knowledge is advancing in the contributions it can make to the search for social equity. Work is forging ahead also in the area of human development, understood as a synthesis of collective action. But the great epistemological breakthrough occurred with the global consciousness reached in Rio de Janeiro, at a summit that was initially perceived as environmental but which finally focused on justice and development.

At Rio we acknowledged that unbridled techno-industrialization was leading us to self-destruction and was gradually losing any semblance of progress, with luxurious, wasteful and destructive patterns of consumption on the one hand and increasing extreme poverty on the other, showing the clear incoherence of present models of development. Over-exploitation of raw materials, urban pollution, global warming, ozone depletion, crops that contribute to desertification, the threat to nature and the fear of collapse led us inescapably to the conclusion that there was a limit to this process, that we could not continue treating our planet as if it were a temporary camp that could be continually moved as resources were exhausted.

In Rio we agreed to ensure the durability, permanence or sustainability of life. We agreed to reconcile our ways with the Earth and with each other. We affirmed our common conviction of the need to meet the requirements of the present and undertook to be stewards of the Earth for future generations. Thus emerged, with force and consensus, the concept of sustainable development, the principles of the Rio Declaration and the commendable work of

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

Agenda 21, a true programme of action for nations as they set a course into the next century.

On that occasion, the President of Bolivia stressed and warned that this valuable instrument should not be turned into one more exercise in international hypocrisy. Today, we fear that the road from Rio to New York has been too long, that we have exhausted ourselves along the way, that the voices of the world have grown weaker, that the pages of the Rio Declaration may fall with this autumn's leaves, and that the great challenge of the century may prove to be only a faint flicker.

We must not forget the overwhelming historical reasons that led us to adopt Agenda 21. Within its 40 chapters and more than 100 programmes it encompasses the most comprehensive framework for decision-making and action that the international community has ever conceived. It addresses aspects of fundamental concern to the environment and development, ranging from trade to international investment, poverty, debt, the fight against pollution, health and technology, education and population, protection of mountain ecosystems and forests, islands surrounded by rising waters, land-locked countries, lack of soil fertility and lack of human opportunity.

Never before has the world seen an instrument so complete and supported by such consensus. Formerly, plans took shape by sectors or by blocs. Agenda 21 includes features of both national and international endeavour, the need for participation by young people, women and indigenous peoples, entrepreneurs, farmers and workers.

The Rio Conference opened a new chapter in the history of international cooperation by addressing the problems of environment and development as global problems that require global solutions.

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

It established the right to development of all countries and the environmental responsibility of the industrialized countries. It also recognized the imperative need for developing countries to be afforded sufficient financial resources and appropriate technologies to advance their process of change towards equitable and sustainable development. The Assembly must turn the promises of Rio into concrete commitments and tangible results.

In our vision of the global partnership for sustainable development, peoples and nations assume new economic, social and political commitments. In keeping with that "spirit of Rio", Mr. Maurice Strong even spoke of an "eco-revolution", urging a change in our perceptions and attitudes.

In this connection, three parameters can help us gauge how far we have come: whether there will be financial resources or new delays; whether the transfer of technology is concrete or abstract; and whether the machinery we are about to establish is or is not consistent with the goals. The answers to those basic concerns, which lie at the heart of the process, will be the measure of the success or failure of the Earth Summit.

Specifically, we agreed in Rio on certain bases for institutional arrangements. On this crucial matter the report of the Secretary-General contains interesting proposals to which the Assembly should give careful attention.

We must be careful to create the right framework for cooperation, with the active involvement of all countries, organizations of the United Nations system, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and social groups.

With these major objectives in mind, a constructive look at the question yields some bases for institutional arrangements that could be summarized as follows: first, integrating the dimensions of development and environment as

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

an organizational principle; secondly, taking man as the centre of concerns related to sustainable development; thirdly, structures and resources commensurate with the scope of the Summit's mandates; fourthly, interdisciplinary institutions emphasizing action and results, locally, nationally, regionally and globally; fifthly, consistency with the principles of universality, democracy, transparency and effectiveness; and, sixthly, coherence and complementarity with the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in its economic and social fields.

In the light of these elements, the General Assembly can begin to play a new and more dynamic role. The highest intergovernmental forum, it has been designated the principal organ for policy decisions and proposals in the follow-up to the Rio Conference.

We have been entrusted with the periodic review of the implementation of Agenda 21, many of whose chapters also assign us the role of taking action under clearly specified mandates. Some of these deserve mention. There is the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the drafting of a convention to combat desertification, particularly in Africa. Chapter 17 recommends that a world conference be held on the management of coastal areas, another on matters related to the Convention on the Law of the Sea and another in 1993 on sustainable development of small islands. Chapter 26 recommends that the General Assembly adopt a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. In particular, it provides a mandate for holding annual meetings between organizations to work out procedures to include the views of indigenous peoples in policies and programmes.

The General Assembly should carry out these and other new tasks in an efficient, transparent and democratic manner, notwithstanding its heavy programme of work. Transferring these issues, especially those relating to

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

Agenda 21, to the Committees would mean separating environment and development, contrary to the successful approach adopted at Rio. We have decided, for the present, that the debate will be in plenary and the negotiations in the Second Committee, but that does not resolve the substantive problem at the level of the General Assembly.

It is precisely the Assembly that must organize itself to carry out its functions in conformity with its new mandate. It should give more effective consideration to the annual report that will be submitted to it through the Economic and Social Council and periodically review and evaluate the progress made by the Conference, especially regarding Agenda 21.

To reach these goals, the Assembly could perhaps establish open-ended ad hoc committees to address the most crucial or controversial issues as a framework for dealing directly with the problems, broadening the dialogue and negotiations and achieving concrete results. That approach worked very well in the final phase of the Summit, in the Preparatory Committee and in the Main Committee, and if it were taken here we would be strengthening the role of the General Assembly in order to ensure the continuation of sustainable development. This is the only organ in the proposed structure that can ensure universal participation and rally the necessary moral and political force to implement Agenda 21.

According to paragraph 38.10, the Economic and Social Council is assigned the new functions of assisting the General Assembly in its coordinated oversight of the implementation of Agenda 21 and of integrating environmental and developmental themes into United Nations policies and programmes.

The Economic and Social Council will be able to make recommendations to the Assembly, to the specialized agencies and to the Member States. Article 64 of the Charter entitles the Economic and Social Council to obtain reports

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

in carrying out its recommendations, which means a closer relationship between that organ and the various intergovernmental organs, agencies and programmes.

Especially as regards Agenda 21, we must ensure that different entities do not act in isolation, with exclusively sectorial approaches and with no coordination between themselves or with the Economic and Social Council. The role of a revitalized Economic and Social Council should be broadened to encompass improved coordination of the work and activities of the United Nations system, including the international financial agencies.

With regard to the Commission on Sustainable Development, we wish to make clear our full support for the establishment of the Commission as a high-level functional organ that takes under consideration all aspects of the follow-up to the Rio Conference and the implementation of Agenda 21, with the functions and powers necessary to carry out its mandate.

We stress the importance of the active participation of the organs, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system, especially the financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations in the deliberations of the Commission. That will provide the Commission with a direct, integrated and multidisciplinary framework, both conceptually and practically, and will endow it with the greatest support and social base.

Similarly, whether under Economic and Social Council rules or its own rules, the Commission should have the power to establish its own subsidiary bodies, given the broad spectrum of tasks assigned to it.

With respect to the membership of the Commission, we believe that its membership should not be the same as that of the Economic and Social Council.

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

Belonging to both would be detrimental to universality and broad participation. Openness and diversity in representation are essential for the democratic functioning and greatest possible transparency of the Commission and of the system.

Paragraph 38.19 of Agenda 21 provides for a highly competent and qualified secretariat to support the work of the Commission and the inter-agency coordinating machinery. We stress the need for that secretariat to have a strong, separate and identifiable structure under the direction of an Under-Secretary-General reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

The organizational principles of the United Nations should be global and sustainable. Accordingly, it is indispensable to have equitable geographical distribution and the best possible training, bearing in mind the experience acquired during the preparation of the Conference. As regards the site of the secretariat, we believe that missions of smaller countries would favour New York, supplementing that centre with branch offices in Geneva and in the developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in order to advance the work of the Commission.

Time is not on our side. Barely seven years remain before the next century - and the next millennium. And here we are, meeting on behalf of those we represent in order to pave the way to the future, to affirm the right of everyone to grow and to share this earthly garden, scarred though it may be with wounds that must be healed.

Unity in diversity should be the hallmark of these new times. Man, with all his values, languages, beliefs, technologies - in a word, his culture - is part of biodiversity.

Our "modern" vision of the ecosystem as a common home is not unlike the cosmic vision of Andean man. It is inscribed in our genetic memory. We have always known that there was an intimate link between the wealth of some and the poverty of others, and that the death of some affects others. The wisdom of our ancient cultures saw a relationship between the sun god and mother Earth, or Pachamama. It saw an intimate link between man and the environment, between the past and the future. To be the steward of the whole, one must care for the life of the parts and bring them together in one shared destiny.

(Mr. Serrate Cuéllar, Bolivia)

We are confident that, thanks to the sound judgement the President has already demonstrated this session, our deliberations will reach a successful conclusion. Before us lie the hopes and challenges that the international community entrusted to us beneath the open arms of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. JOHANSSON (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report and for his inspiring and constructive statement this morning.

Five months have passed since Rio. The memories of a well-organized Conference have not faded. The concrete results reflected a serious and efficient preparatory process, and culminated in the adoption of documents of major and lasting significance. The Conference highlighted the link between environment and development and raised the level of awareness all around the world. The Earth Summit established the conditions for new political action, both locally and internationally. But it was also a point of departure for a new era of multilateral negotiation: in Rio we all stressed that the Conference was part of a process and that its results could only be judged in the light of the follow-up.

Now is the time to move forward and translate our commitments from Rio de Janeiro into concrete action. We must change attitudes and policies to make sustainable development possible.

The General Assembly is a world forum, an organ for global policy-making at a high level. It is our obligation to ensure that the policy decisions agreed upon here will guide and inspire the implementation of commitments made

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

in Rio. But here we can only forge the tools and develop the instruments. The real agents of sustainable development are the women and men working in fields or in cities far away from the East River. All these people have the right to expect us to create a firm and efficient system for the follow-up of Rio. What, then, are the components of this system?

First, it is the global level, at which the Commission on Sustainable Development will have a crucial role in enabling the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to fulfil their policy-making and coordinating functions.

Secondly, it is the combined effort of multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, business and industry, to transfer the required technical and financial resources to make world-wide sustainable development possible.

Thirdly, it is the decentralized, concrete level, involving a multitude of United Nations agencies and other bodies, including the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the mechanisms established or to be established to manage our new generation of conventions.

Fourthly, it is the national and local level, where the global perspective has to be translated into practical action by literally millions of decision makers.

Let me comment briefly on each of these points.

Our main concern at this session of the General Assembly is obviously the Commission on Sustainable Development that is envisaged. We are most grateful for the thorough presentation contained in the Secretary-General's report.

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

In our view, the institutional chapter of Agenda 21 contains a balanced set of recommendations. It gives us the possibility and the responsibility to create something new and innovative within the United Nations system. It has to be the central institution to carry on the spirit of Rio de Janeiro, further to develop its achievements and to give continuous inspiration to the whole system. The Commission on Sustainable Development must not be bogged down in routine reports and heaps of documentation.

The new Commission should be well integrated in the general activities of the United Nations in the social and economic field, with a rational and efficient link to the Economic and Social Council, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report. It should perform policy reviews in the broad perspective of sustainable development.

We are convinced that the Secretary-General will organize the secretariat services in an efficient way, and that they will be managed at an appropriately high level to respond to the new requirements. This means that he will have to strike the right balance between the need for integration in present structures and the need for a special secretariat unit, preferably based in New York, to serve the new Commission as well as the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the high-level advisory body.

We have confidence in the way in which Ambassador Razali of Malaysia has approached the negotiations ahead of us. We share his view that our task here is to find practical solutions, limiting ourselves to those areas where General Assembly action is necessary, such as a decision on the size of the Commission. Our preference is to have a number close to that of the Economic and Social Council.

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

We attach significant political importance to the Commission on Sustainable Development. It should therefore meet at high official level, with part of the sessions involving ministerial participation. We foresee thematic sessions and active participation by observer countries. Proper gender and age balance must be ensured in the work of the Commission. We are also favorable to active involvement by the community of non-governmental organizations, based on the experience from the procedures used at the Rio Conference.

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

In the opinion of the Swedish Government, one of the great achievements of Rio de Janeiro was to link environment and development very firmly together. Even if the language in chapters 33 and 34 is convoluted and the result of a great deal of negotiation, the basic message comes over loud and clear: substantial new and additional resources are needed. At the same time, the developed world is in recession, with high unemployment and weak investment.

But perhaps the Rio de Janeiro follow-up can provide some light at the end of the tunnel: We must not lose sight of the potential of environmental technologies, new products and new business opportunities. As stated in Agenda 21, resources liberated from disarmament could find their way into the environment sector. We need to display imagination and boldness, not forgetting the long term because of present difficulties.

Therefore, the forthcoming meeting of Global Environment Facility (GEF) participants is of crucial importance. The Facility has to prove its capacity to reform its structure, procedures and decision-making, and the developed country participants have to show confidence in the new mechanism by providing a substantial replenishment.

At the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee the Nordic countries launched the concept of a package of financial measures, including, of course, the 0.7 per cent official development assistance (ODA) target. Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 reflects this approach. We have to continue along that road. We share the view of the Secretary-General that the first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development should devote substantial attention to the transfer of financial resources and technology. In particular, new attention should be given to innovative methods of financing, not least in the light of the present budgetary constraints. In a longer-term perspective,

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

international resource mobilization for sustainable development purposes, preferably based on fees and levies to control resource use and pollution volumes, should be seriously considered. In facing these central issues the Commission would gain authority and lay a firm basis for its future work.

For many years now Swedish development cooperation has been way beyond the 0.7 per cent target. Concern for the environment has been introduced as a fundamental objective for this cooperation, and all major projects in which we participate are now submitted to environmental assessment. This year additional resources - SKr 60 million - to support global environment action by developing countries have been created over and above ODA.

From the beginning of the UNCED process Sweden has advocated a decentralized approach. It is important to have at the centre a structure that functions well. But the impact will be very limited indeed if different agencies of the United Nations system - and outside, including non-governmental organizations - are not engaged in the work.

It is therefore essential that the Agenda 21 recommendations be carefully studied and acted upon in the various agencies. All Governments should feel a responsibility to take the necessary initiatives in the different governing bodies. We find the proposals for coordination contained in the Secretary-General's report very pertinent. In particular, we feel that coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bretton Woods institutions should be enhanced.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should continue to play an essential role as the principal body within the United Nations system for

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

environmental matters. It should review its programme of work in the light of the results of UNCED and make any necessary adjustments. It is particularly important to strengthen its catalytic role to stimulate and promote environmental activities in the United Nations system as well as its role for the development of environmental law and environmental monitoring and assessment. Furthermore, UNEP should contribute to the Commission's reviews by providing environmental assessments of development sectors.

The question of environmental emergencies requires increased attention by the United Nations system. In this context I wish to remind the Assembly of the report adopted last year on, among other things, the use of military resources for civilian purposes in, for example, such emergencies.

Regarding the issue of the impact of military activity on the environment, we would have wished to see more progress in Rio, but a beginning was made. Agenda 21 states that the same rules should be applied for both military and civilian handling of hazardous waste. The Swedish Government intends to pursue this matter within the framework of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Among other areas that we emphasize, I wish to mention the energy sector, which is of crucial importance for sustainable development. Increased energy efficiency and the development of new and renewable sources of energy are key issues.

In the field of chemicals, it is essential that international cooperation be strengthened. We must build on the achievements of Rio, where the special responsibility of industrialized countries in this area was clearly spelled out.

Within the framework of the decentralized follow-up, some specific decisions should be taken at this session of the General Assembly. I refer in

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

particular to the interim action on the Convention on Climate Change. It is important to ensure that this process, so crucial for the future of this important Convention, has sufficient resources at its disposal.

The General Assembly should also take the necessary decisions to establish a negotiating committee for a convention to combat desertification. This is an issue of great practical significance, but it is more than that; it is a symbol of the responsibility of the world community towards Africa. The time set for this negotiation is short. The negotiating objectives have to be limited and clear, so that a convention which could serve as a basis for further action is ready by June 1994.

Agenda 21 recommended special action in favour of small island developing States. Sweden supports the proposal to hold a conference in Barbados in 1993. The Swedish Government hopes that the short time for preparation will not create difficulties. In that context it is important that the experience and capacity of UNEP be fully used.

Let me finally, under the heading of the decentralized approach, recall that Agenda 21 recommends a study of the feasibility of convening regional conferences on transport and the environment. In our view, the transport sector is of key importance for most of the problems we are dealing with in the UNCED follow-up. It stands right at the centre of the debate on environment and the economy, and it literally concerns everyone. The Swedish Government expects the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to play a central role in organizing a conference in our region.

It is at the national level that the success or failure of the UNCED follow-up will be decided. National and local action has to be taken without delay. Information on national action should be provided in an appropriate

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

way to the United Nations system, including the Commission, so that we can all profit from the experience of others. The UNCED national reports set an excellent example.

The Swedish Government has initiated a number of activities since the Rio Conference. Various means have been used to inform the public and many organizations and institutions on its main outcome. At a major two-day seminar at the end of August we analysed its results and discussed ideas on how to proceed with the follow-up work.

Two weeks ago the Government presented a White Paper on UNCED to Parliament. It set out our assessment of the Rio Conference and indicated the further follow-up procedure. The White Paper also contained a full translation of the UNCED decisions, including Agenda 21, into Swedish.

Sustainable development has to be a reality for all sectors of society. The Swedish Government is now planning to distribute the UNCED material to a very wide spectrum of society, including the municipalities. We will ask them to analyse the parts of the Rio decisions that apply to them and come back towards the middle of next year with concrete proposals on how they intend to implement those decisions. On the basis of this material the Government will present concrete proposals to Parliament on the implementation of the Rio decisions.

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

In launching the UNCED follow-up, we are faced with many specific problems. The implementation of Agenda 21 and of the other documents requires serious, hard work by many people over many years. We have to approach all the details with respect and careful consideration. But the message from Rio is above all a holistic and integrated one, part and parcel of the new world which is being born. It is a world that permits great hope, but it is also a world of great risk, not least with respect to the global problems of the environment and development. Perhaps we have a window of opportunity of just 25 to 50 years to change unsustainable lifestyle and consumption patterns and to take radical steps to eradicate poverty. This is a short time.

So let us take a penetrating view: particularly in the developed world, we need to look deep into the way in which our societies and economies are organized. In Sweden, the Government is currently working on a bill to prepare a decisive move into what can be termed the "ecocycle" society, with the concepts of "reduce, reuse and recycle" at its centre. This is a difficult but necessary transition.

The very dimensions of the undertaking also force us to take a long view. Deep-rooted changes in society can take place only over time. They will require much educational effort and awareness-building, but the work must start without delay. The long view also has another significance: our responsibility towards unborn generations. The effects of our actions - or inaction - will be felt long after we are gone.

Finally, we need a broad view. The planet is one. No security or prosperity can be safeguarded in the long term if present trends and present differences between rich and poor prevail. Efficient cooperation for sustainable development is in the interest of everyone, and we in the north

(Mr. Johansson, Sweden)

must meet our partners in the rest of the world with respect for their needs, national customs, traditions and knowledge.

We need a penetrating view, a long view and a broad view. This is easy to say, but so very difficult to translate into action. The time for rhetoric has passed; the time for action has come.

Mrs. FELDGRILL-ZANKEL (Austria): It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this audience. It is my strong belief personally, and that of my Government, that we should stress the importance of the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the start we are giving it today.

As one of the participants in the Earth Summit, I consider Rio to be not just a conference among others; it represented, and still represents, a decisive factor in regard to both the present and the future of our planet.

For Austria, the UNCED process is the first global effort to come to terms with the challenging task of harmonizing both environment and development, thus making environment and development issues partners for the future of humankind.

Moreover, the results of the Rio Conference provide the basis for a new global partnership. Now, in the aftermath of the Conference, we have to translate it into practice, as the Secretary-General pointed out this morning, into a concrete economic and political reality. For developed countries, developing countries and for countries with economies in transition, sustainable development has not yet become reality; it is the objective all of us have to aim for.

UNCED has already fulfilled a most important task by making both Government and people aware of the challenges ahead of us. We simply must

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

carry on, and I am very glad to have seen and heard so many encouraging and ambitious plans today as to how to go about it.

It also became apparent in Rio that environmental protection on the one hand and economic prosperity on the other cannot be achieved lastingly at the expense of each other. Moreover, it was once again clearly demonstrated that these two pillars on which sustainable development must be built need to become very close allies. For this to happen, we have to work towards a system of open, competitive markets in which prices should reflect environmental costs as well as the scarcity of natural resources.

Finally, Rio demonstrated that the global problems of humanity cannot be solved by Governments alone. Hence Austria welcomes the mobilization and the manifold contributions of the independent sector. This level of involvement of groups and individuals is a crucial factor today and absolutely must continue.

The Earth is the common heritage of all of us, and we all need to accept the shared responsibility to care for it. It is my firm conviction that in this move the developed countries have to take the lead.

The action required must start at the national level - at home. I am proud to be able to report that Austria has already undertaken a series of decisive steps to do its share: we will have reduced the use of CFCs by almost 90 per cent by the end of this year and will completely phase them out by the end of 1994; to tackle the problem of tropospheric ozone, which is of increasing concern, Austria has passed legislation aiming at a 70-per-cent reduction in all precursor substances; our waste-management policy aims at a 50-per-cent reduction in municipal wastes within the next five years; and

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

right now we are preparing a comprehensive national environment plan, which aims at implementing those elements of Agenda 21 that have not yet been fully covered by the steps we have already taken and which certainly have improved the environmental situation in our country.

In addition to legislation, initial steps are being taken towards the introduction of economic instruments. In this sense, Austria welcomes the initiative taken by the Economic Commission for Europe, which proposed the introduction of a tax on C02 emissions and energy.

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

We support the introduction of such a tax because, as Mr. Töpfer pointed out this morning, this instrument will be the most powerful single measure to curb carbon dioxide emissions, to enhance the efficient use of energy and, in this way, to combat climate change. For Austria, however, nuclear energy is not part of this catalogue. Austria is pursuing the vision of a Central Europe without nuclear power plants.

At Rio Austria signed both the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. As a first step, Austria appreciates the consensus that has been reached. However, we have to initiate urgently the implementation of the Convention on Climate Change, and Austria strongly supports this. In this context, may I recall the initiative Austria launched in Rio aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Toronto target.

Austria, as a country nearly 46 per cent of whose surface is covered by forests, and proud of its sustainable forest management, supported the Declaration on Forest Principles. It should, in future, provide a basis for the negotiation of an internationally binding instrument for the protection and sustainable use of forests, an instrument which in our view should cover all types of forests all over the planet. Austria has already introduced legislation on labelling timber gained by sustainable forest management.

On a global level, the international institutional set-up will be of paramount importance for the successful follow-up of the Rio Conference. Austria is looking forward with great interest to the negotiations on the Commission on Sustainable Development. Its membership should represent the highest possible political level, preferably ministers of the environment, as has been previously pointed out.

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

In our view, the Commission should be small enough to allow for efficient work and large enough to guarantee its representativity. Well-balanced geographical distribution will be essential. Given the widely varying country situation and interests in terms of sustainable development that exist within the traditional groups, it will be important to ensure adequate representation in the Commission for all groupings of countries and individual countries.

The Commission should provide for representation of various parts of the United Nations system and other international organizations. Non-governmental organizations should be allowed to contribute to its work. This will ensure the success for which we all aiming.

Secretariat support for the Commission will be critical. The secretariat should be effective and independent and draw on the expertise gained in the UNCED preparatory process. It should be established in such a way that the sustainable development perspective is integrated into the entire field of economic and social development within the United Nations Secretariat. As a matter of fact, I think the United Nations might even, by this structure, provide an appropriate pattern for Governments to follow in implementing sustainable development in their respective countries.

In his report, the Secretary-General recommended that

> "the Commission should build its work on that of all appropriate sectoral intergovernmental subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that address issues related to sustainable development, and elaborate on that basis comprehensive and coherent policy recommendations to the Council and, through it, to the General Assembly." (A/47/598, para. 34)

Austria fully agrees with the Secretary-General that a clear division of

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

responsibilities and the establishment of optimal reporting patterns are essential.

We should like to highlight the need for a satisfactory interface with the Economic and Social Council, especially with regard to a future international development council function, the macroeconomic guidance function and coordination function of the Economic and Social Council.

The Economic and Social Council is the charter body mandated to oversee and coordinate the interplay of subsidiary organs in the three main fields of sustainable development - that is, the economic field, the social field, and the environment and natural resources field. It is also mandated by the Charter to elaborate broad policy guidelines in the field of sustainable development. Austria has submitted a proposal to enhance the Council's capacity to discharge these two functions more effectively with the help of a system of integrated reports.

My delegation has taken note with great interest of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) statement to the General Assembly. Since the implementation of Agenda 21 will require an unprecedented level of cooperation not only between nations, but also between international organizations, there is a clear need for strengthened inter-agency consultations as well as for a clear division of labour among the various components of the United Nations system. Austria therefore welcomes the decisions of ACC to establish an inter-agency committee on sustainable development.

The observations on reporting made by the ACC, in our view, warrant careful consideration. My delegation looks forward to the findings of ACC with regard to the assessment of new and existing reporting requirements relevant to Agenda 21, as well as to the recommendations resulting from this

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

assessment, including proposals to avoid duplication in reporting, ensure cost-effectiveness and foster integration of environment and development.

Regional commissions will have to play a very important role in terms of assessing regional situations and of facilitating regional action.

At Rio we agreed that developed countries and others in a position to do so should make initial financial commitments in order to give effect to the decisions of the Conference, and should report on such plans and commitments to the General Assembly.

Austria recognizes the need for an increase in the transfer of resources to developing countries. Thus, Austria has pledged 400 million Austrian schillings - which amounts to around $38 million - to the initial three-year pilot phase of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is prepared to consider positively substantial support of a restructured future GEF. Moreover, with the objective of promoting the protection and the sustainable use of tropical forests, as well as the preservation of the natural habitat of the indigenous populations, Austria has earmarked the amount of 200 million Austrian schillings - the equivalent of around $19 million - for projects geared towards sustainable forest management.

Austria will also participate in the tenth replensishment of the International Development Association (IDA). Furthermore, Austria recently decided to increase its contribution to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to allocate $1 million for Capacity 21.

(Mrs. Feldgrill-Zankel, Austria)

In the years to come one of the most important tasks of the United Nations will be to look at some of the constituents of the challenge of sustainable development. Some of these problems are before the General Assembly. Let me mention only desertification and the development of small island States. Many aspects of the problem are already on the international agenda and will be dealt with in the near future, while others, such as energy-related questions, still need more international attention.

If we are to be successful in translating the spirit of Rio into political reality we will have to sustain the momentum and tackle all the underlying problems. Innovation, courage and international solidarity are called for. I agree with my Swedish colleague that action is required now.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) (interpretation from French): The delegation of Benin, on whose behalf I have the honour to address the Assembly, is pleased that the Assembly is considering the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held last June at Rio de Janeiro. It is a question of historic importance.

The accuracy and breadth of the report of the Secretary-General bode well for the coming deliberations and for the decisions we shall take in the interest of present and future generations.

I wish to express my great admiration for Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, who this morning, in his capacity as Rapporteur-General of the Rio Summit, made a statement whose clarity was matched only by its conciseness. As an African, I feel proud.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

Peoples and Governments throughout the world demonstrated keen awareness by sending to the city at the foot of Sugar Loaf Mountain high-level, highly skilled delegations, of which at least 130 were led by Heads of State or Government. This was due to the political will of world leaders, expressed through the General Assembly, and, above all, to a courageous and talented man, a man of great vision, endurance, generosity and faith in the survival of mankind. I refer to Mr. Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of UNCED. I pay tribute also to his team of able, devoted men and women.

Nor can I neglect to reiterate my delegation's congratulations to Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore, who, during his two-year tenure as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference and then as Chairman of the Main Committee at Rio, impressed all delegations with his experience in international affairs and his effectiveness in the negotiations and in guiding the work of the bodies he chaired.

I also reiterate my delegation's sincere thanks to the people and Government of Brazil for having hosted with such brilliance a universal meeting that promoted crystallization of a new awareness that the Earth is one and that the world, too, must seek to be one.

In conformity with its mandate under resolution 44/228, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, known also as the Earth Summit, recommended strategies and measures to reverse the effects of the deterioration of the environment and to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

It is no exaggeration to say that the Rio Conference was the greatest diplomatic meeting ever held. The high stakes were understood by all, and this created enthusiasm among States and within the United Nations system, as well as among the many non-governmental organizations and other pressure groups that met in the former capital of Brazil jointly to consider the foundations for our future life.

The hopes this aroused can be summed up in the lucid words uttered at the end of the deliberations on 14 June 1992 by a Brazilian journalist:

"After millions of words, one last phrase matters: 'Let us begin'".

In other words, after hundreds of speeches by world leaders, the only thing worth considering is action. At Rio it seemed that in 1992 mankind had finally rediscovered the sacred value of its home: Planet Earth.

The concept of sustainable development must be more than a conviction held by peoples and their leaders; it must become reality. Sustainable development covers all aspects of human life, particularly the political, economic, social and technological aspects. Thus it cannot be ignored by any planner or political decision-maker - much less by any international expert charged with carrying out studies or developing theories.

In the developing countries our major concern with respect to achieving sustainable development is the elimination of poverty; throughout the preparatory process and at Rio we worked to have this taken into account. Today poverty poses one of the greatest threats not only to the future of mankind but to the very future of the planet. Poverty is a universal problem. It is a burning issue in the villages and hamlets of Africa, Asia,

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as at the foot of skyscrapers and in the shanty towns and suburbs of the big cities of the industrialized countries. It ravages North and South alike, all races, all religions; most often it strikes the most vulnerable sectors of society, irrespective of sex or age.

Poor countries and poor people throughout the world get their food from the earth, their water from rivers and wells, and their fuel from forests. They desperately need those resources, but have no choice but to overexploit and destroy their environment merely to survive.

It was this that we stressed at Rio; it was above all to combat it that we prepared and adopted Agenda 21. That is why the Assembly must take bold, sound decisions to follow up the Earth Summit. Agenda 21 is a world programme of action for integrating environment and development. It reflects consensus and political commitment at the highest level between industrialized and developing countries. Encompassing all fields where the economy has an impact on the environment, Agenda 21 is a rich and varied programme that addresses today's urgent problems and challenges and seeks to prepare the world for the tasks that await it in the coming century.

That is why Agenda 21 places special emphasis on about a dozen highly important programme areas to help all our countries create a policy of sound development. They are: combating poverty; providing drinking water and sanitary facilities; combating desertification and drought; agriculture and rural development; education; health; long-term management of waste water and other wastes; demographic policy; management of all types of forests; protection of the atmosphere; environmentally sound transfer of technology; and so forth.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

The key to the success of Agenda 21 is both the establishment of appropriate institutional machinery and the availability of sufficient means - above all financial means - for implementation. By the terms of the institutional arrangements adopted at Rio, all United Nations organs have a role to play in the implementation of Agenda 21.

To ensure the effective follow-up of the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and to coordinate the activities of United Nations organs in integrating environment and development, it was agreed that, in conformity with Article 68 of the Charter, a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development should be created. As indicated in the relevant chapter of Agenda 21, the Commission

> "would consist of representatives of States elected as members, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution." (A/CONF.151/26 (vol. III), para. 38.11)

While respecting that principle, my delegation would like all categories of development to be represented among the members of the Commission: least developed countries, small island developing States, intermediate-income countries, industrialized countries, and countries in transition from planned to market economies. Considering the universal nature of questions linked to sustainable development and the effectiveness the Commission will need to do its job properly, my delegation thinks it reasonable to support the proposal of the Group of 77 that the number of members be set at 53.

Moreover, my delegation proposes that the members of the Commission be elected for a renewable three-year term. In conformity with the practice set by the General Assembly, States Members of the United Nations which are not members of the Commission, members of specialized agencies and observers to the General Assembly could be granted observer status in the Commission.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

Benin reiterates its support for the idea in Agenda 21 that competent and interested non-governmental organizations, including those in the scientific community, the private sector, women's groups, youth associations, trade unions and so forth, should have the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Commission and to establish appropriate contacts with United Nations bodies.

The delegation of Benin stresses that the eight functions of the Commission defined in chapter 38 of Agenda 21, as well as those flowing from chapter 33, on financial resources and mechanisms, are so relevant that they require no further analysis or comment.

As to the frequency, duration and venue of the Commission's sessions, my delegation proposes that beginning in 1993 the Commission hold an annual regular session three months before the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. Each of those regular sessions would last four weeks to permit in-depth consideration of the items on the agenda. The first week would be devoted to a general debate on a specific subject, with ministerial participation to the extent possible. Finally, the Commission could hold each regular session at a place decided upon at the end of the previous session. For obvious reasons that members of the Group of 77 have had, or will have, occasion to state in this Hall, my delegation would like the first regular session, in 1993, to be held at Headquarters in New York.

On the basis of the decision of our Heads of State or Government that the General Assembly should periodically consider progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, Benin proposes that every five years the Assembly hold a special session at Headquarters in New York for review and appraisal; the first such special session could take place in 1997.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

Obviously, an administrative structure must be set up to support the work of the Commission; a highly qualified, able and, I would add, independent secretariat should be set up within the United Nations Secretariat; as suggested in Agenda 21, it would draw,

"inter alia, on the expertise gained in the Conference preparatory process". (A/CONF.151/26 (vol.III), para. 38.19)

My delegation has confidence in the Secretary-General, who will assess the importance that all delegations attach to this question and assign to the secretariat sufficient personnel who will be worthy of the hopes so often expressed by one and all. The secretariat would inter alia provide data bases of information and publications on the intergration of environment and development, a centre for the analysis, compilation and coordination of all matters that promote the concept of sustainable development.

My delegation has conducted an in-depth analysis of Agenda 21's 40 chapters and the hundreds of spheres of activities it describes in terms of principles of action, objectives, activities and means of implementation. We have closely examined the important role to be played by the various United Nations organs, programmes and bodies in their respective areas of competence and in conformity with their respective mandates. We have considered the coordinating role the Commission secretariat must play. In the light of all that, my delegation considers that the headquarters for this administrative structure should be established in Geneva, as proposed here by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin on 28 September 1992 from this rostrum.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

Geneva is clearly a central city that can take advantage of technical cooperation from the specialized agencies more easily than other cities. It would also be easy to make rapid use of the rich archives of the secretariat of the Preparatory Committee for UNCED, without having to move them. Without going into the administrative details, my delegation would support the establishment of a liaison office at Headquarters in New York and another in Nairobi.

Although we share the concern of some delegations that they might be unable to participate in the activities of the Commission if its headquarters is not in New York, where all countries are represented, my delegation would note that what counts is participation in the work of the Commission, not easy access to its secretariat.

Before turning to the other decisions of the Rio summit, let me say a few words on the relationship my delegation thinks should exist between the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development and the principal organs of the United Nations, notably the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. As the General Assembly is the highest United Nations organ charged with adopting resolutions and setting political guidelines, and the main organ for decision-making and consideration of matters relating to the follow-up to UNCED, the Commission would report to it through the Economic and Social Council. The subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council - the Committee on Natural Resources, the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, and the Commission for Science and Technology for Development - would report to the Council through the high-level Commission for Sustainable Development.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

The second key to the success of Agenda 21 is undoubtedly that of the financial resources needed for effective implementation of Agenda 21's various programmes and activities. The implementation of the various large-scale programmes for sustainable development under Agenda 21 requires major new and additional financial resources for the developing countries. Funds will have be made available as grants or under concessionary terms, according to sound and fair criteria and indicators.

We know that generally speaking the financing for Agenda 21 will come from the public and private sectors in our own countries. My delegation considers that in the case of developing countries, in particular least developed countries, whose main source of external financing is official development assistance, it will still be necessary to obtain major new and additional resources for the achievement of sustainable development.

Benin welcomes the willingness of certain developed countries to honour their commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance and, if it has not already been done, to increase their assistance programmes to achieve that target as soon as possible for the rapid and effective implementation of Agenda 21. My delegation thanks the developed countries that have already exceeded that United Nations target, and encourages them to continue their efforts vis-à-vis the countries of the South.

As to the various multilateral channels and mechanisms, including the regional and subregional development banks, that must ensure the provision of new and additional resources, my delegation considers that as part of their

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

participation in the Commission they should report annually on new and additional resources made available to developing countries for the implementation of Agenda 21.

The Global Environment Fund must be restructured to encourage universal participation, to ensure transparent and democratic management, and to provide, as grants or on favourable terms, new and additional financial resources, in particular to developing countries. Access to that body's funds and their payment must be based on agreed criteria, without new forms of conditionality.

As indicated in Agenda 21, the reduction, if not the cancellation, of debt is another vital way to give developing countries the means they need to achieve sustainable development.

The delegation of Benin supports the proposal of my brother and friend Ambassador Ouedraogo of Burkina Faso that a pledging conference be held before the end of the current session on the financing of Agenda 21.

We welcome the establishment by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of the Capacity 21 fund to help developing countries create their own national Agenda 21 and implement their initiatives for promoting sustainable development.

The Rio summit focused well-deserved attention on fragile ecosystems, including deserts, semi-arid lands, mountains, swamps, small islands and certain coastal regions.

My delegation is particularly concerned with deserts and arid, semi-arid and dry areas. On the basis of decision 44/437 and resolution 44/172 of 19 December 1989 and resolution 46/161 of 19 December 1991, we consider it

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

time for the international community to draft an international convention on the fight against desertification and drought. To that end, my delegation supports the provisions of chapter 12 of Agenda 21, which calls on the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draft such a convention. In that connection, we support the relevant remarks made a short time ago by the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso.

Some 10 per cent of the Earth's potentially fertile land has been turned into desert or arid land through human action or negligence; 25 per cent of remaining land is threatened today; desertification affects approximately one sixth of the world population; and the most visible consequences of this phenomenon are the spread of poverty and the deterioration of the soil. That shows that our ecological concerns are not something out of science fiction, but reflect a very real and ever more serious danger. The conclusion of an international convention on the fight against desertification in all affected regions, particularly in Africa, containing specific commitments by all parties, would be a point of departure for eliminating the nightmare lived by hundreds of millions of people.

Agenda 21 duly addressed the serious environmental problems of coastal areas, especially the lowest-lying, and by small island developing States, which are extremely vulnerable to global warming and to the rising sea-level. My delegation thinks it is of urgent importance to adopt the decisions needed to convene before 1994 a world conference to pool experience on the management and integrated development of coastal areas as recommended in chapter 17 of Agenda 21. We would also support the proposed convening in 1993 of the first world conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

Agenda 21 was not the only document before the Heads of State or Government at the Rio Conference. Four other instruments are also of historic importance for the future of our planet: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; the statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests; the Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development stresses the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home, and aims to establish a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation. It proclaims that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development and that they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

Although non-binding, the Rio Declaration demonstrates that the countries of the world have set guidelines for their mutual relations and for their relations with our planet. For the first time, there is a clear mention of the right to development, for which the developing countries, along with the world's highest moral authorities, notably the late Pope Paul VI, had been calling for so long.

Since the Rio Declaration did not address all the concerns expressed during the preparatory process, the General Assembly should adopt a resolution on the preparation of an Earth charter for adoption on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. That would accord with the proposal of the Secretary-General of UNCED, Mr. Maurice Strong, in his closing statement at the Rio summit.

(Mr. Mongbé, Benin)

The non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests shows that the question of the forests is linked to the whole range of other environmental questions and to related matters such as the right to sustainable socio-economic development. These principles must be applied to all types of forests, whether natural or man-made, in every geographic and climatic zone: southern, northern, sub-temperate, temperate, sub-tropical or tropical.

At the Conference, plenipotentiaries of States members of the European Community were invited to sign the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Benin is honoured to have been among the 154 countries that on 14 June 1992 took the positive step of signing those two instruments, which open the door to genuine protection of life on Earth. My delegation hopes that all States, in accordance with their own constitutional procedures, will ratify the two Conventions so they can come effectively into force.

I wish in conclusion to say on behalf of my delegation that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, whose report is before us this morning, was a major step in the North-South dialogue. It brought about a new mode of international cooperation, even if it did not institute satisfactory reforms to meet all the challenges facing mankind with respect to sustainable development. It began a process of reversing mankind's relationship with the Earth.

The Rio Earth summit is history. But what we are now calling the spirit of Rio will brighten with an inspiring light the march of all peoples towards progress.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.